

BORN OF WATER AND SPIRIT:

A

SERIES OF ESSAYS

CONCERNING

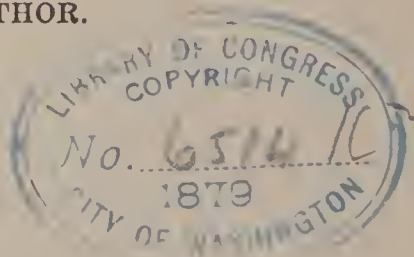
REGENERATION AND THE NEW LIFE.

BY

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BORN OF WATER AND SPIRIT.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“ ‘Get thy spindle and thy distaff ready and God shall send thee flax.’ ”

Old Proverb.

“I have got my spindle and my distaff ready, my pen and mind, never doubting for one instant, that God will send me flax.”

Gold Foil.

Now, if the reader will pardon my speaking to him a little more confidentially than may beseem a stranger, I will say that I see,—or seem to see—an abundance of flax around me waiting to be spun, am strongly inclined to spin a little if I can, have got my spindle and distaff ready, and yet hesitate to begin. Can I spin well enough to make it worth the while? There is so much spinning done now-a-days that comes to naught! One thought encourages me. I have read that in the olden time the Lord stirred up the hearts and stimulated the ability of some poor people,—they were brickmakers and their wives who had just escaped out of slavery—so that they spun goats’ hair and blue and purple

and scarlet and fine linen fittingly for those beautiful curtains of the tabernacle ; and I think that if he stirs my heart—I believe he has done it—and helps my mind, I, too, can spin. Who knows but that, if he helps me, I may spin some threads that will yet help to form those white robes which shall be worn by some of my readers when, by and by, they are admitted to the presence-chamber of the King of Kings, in the heavenly glory ? Is the thought presumptuous ? It may seem so, and yet, the white robes are the righteousness of the saints, —who knows but that it may be even so ?

The flax that I would fain spin, or, dropping the metaphor, the thoughts which I would arrange for you, relate to the New Birth, the Regeneration of a human soul.

Now it may be that to you this subject may seem so trite, so worn, that any thoughts in regard to it must needs be uninteresting. To this, I can only say, that to me the subject does not appear by any means worn out. I am deeply interested in it, and will hope that you may be, if you go with me a little way in its investigation.

That it is an important subject, few will deny. Considered as a doctrine, it is a central one in the gospel system. Take it away, and you have removed all that is distinctive in the gospel.

If we consider it as a subject, we can but remember that it is one which angels desire to look into ; and surely it must be one of the deepest interest,

and of ever new interest to us whose home in heaven and happiness for eternity depend upon its being to us a matter of personal experience.

Thinking of it as a work of God, we shall see that God has given to it exceeding care and pains. Is it too much to say that what God has seen it necessary to do, in order to effect the salvation of a single soul, has cost him more than the creation of the earth and all its inhabitants? Creation did not cost the life of suffering, and death of agony, of God's only and well-beloved Son.

If we do not see the importance of this subject, it must be because our perceptive faculties are imperfect; because the spiritual eyes we see with are "eyes that see not." Probably, to the cow, the most beautiful and sweetest floweret of the field or wild-wood has no beauty and no meaning unless it offers her food; but to an intelligent Christian, one whose eyes and ears have been opened, the little blossom is seen to be a message from the All-Father,—a love gift from our Elder Brother; it tells a story of infinite love prompting infinite skill. Now, seen with the best of our human eyes, it may be that there are many things which God has made, which hardly seem any honor to the Maker:—by and by, when we come to use such eyes as are, no doubt, prepared for those who shall dwell in the "many mansions," and can comprehend more fully than now, the plans and ideas of the Creator, these very things, it can hardly be doubted, will appear to

us beautiful and glorious. The most unsightly reptile will then, probably, be to us a thing of beauty, and the animalcule, to which a drop of water is an ocean and an hour an age, be exalted and glorified as a necessary part of God's perfect work in creation.

It is not permitted to us, at present, to look forward into the eternal world and see things very clearly. Yet we may believe, with much assurance, that the everlasting life promised to God's children will be a real life, full of precious privileges and enjoyments. You and I do not believe that we are to spend eternity wholly, or chiefly, in choir practice. We may reasonably expect that one of our joys—a joy that cannot but be ever fresh and new—will be the study of God and his works. Then the clouds and the darkness that are about us, the fogs and smoke of earth that so hinder our vision, and the infirmities of the flesh that render it weak, will all be gone, and, we may hope, the secrets of the universe be laid open before us, the Creator himself being our loving teacher and guide.

When that time comes, and we pass from death into life—glorious, perfect, eternal life, can we believe that we shall gaze longer or more wonderingly upon any of the other works of God than upon the regeneration of a soul? Will worlds or systems of worlds, interest us more, think you, than what Jesus has done and is doing to save poor sinful men and women?

If now, we begin to do, here and at once, what

we expect to do in the hereafter, and study Regeneration as a work of God, our first inquiry will naturally be :—What are God's objects in undertaking this work ? What results does he expect from it ? Is it merely to save men ? Beyond question, that is one principal object. He purposes to gather from amongst the children of men a great multitude, that no man can number, and bring them to dwell with him forever in heaven. And each one of that multitude must be specially fitted for heaven. The most careless sinner knows, in his heart, that he is totally unfit for that home of the holy ; that he could not be admitted there ; and, if he could, that he would not be happy there. He must be so cleansed and changed in heart as to become morally harmonious with the inhabitants of heaven, and be so fitted to the place as to be, as it were to it, “native and to the manor born.” Nor can this change originate with the sinner himself. An Ethiopian may change his skin, and a leopard his spots, as soon as one born in sin and shapen in iniquity, may make himself fit for heaven. God alone can do this ; he can, and he has undertaken to do it by “the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

But, God has evidently another object in view besides the salvation of individuals of the human race. By bringing individuals, one at a time, into submission to his will and harmony with his purposes, he seems to expect to bring the world, at

last, under his moral government. God does not intend that this world shall always occupy the position of a revolted, rebellious world, where sin and wrong bear rule. The kingdom of Immanuel is set up, and is, certainly, however slow its progress may appear to be, to overturn and break in pieces all the kingdoms of this world,—all systems of organized and legalized sin and wrong,—is to be established over all the earth, and to stand forever. Now, this kingdom is extended and gains power just in proportion as men become God's children by spiritual generation.

If we look backward over the history of the world, it may seem to us that,

“ Evil has won in the horrid feud
Of ages with the throne,”—that
“ Evil stands on the neck of good,
And rules the world alone.”

A second look may lead us to think that God has been trying experiments in managing and subduing his revolted subjects ; and that these experiments have not been successful.

Do not be startled—this is spoken reverently :—experiments do not always argue ignorance or weakness on the part of the experimenter—they may be used for the purpose of teaching the ignorant, and demonstrating truth. Besides, it is safe to follow the Bible in its exhibition of God and his works ; and that often speaks of God as though he tried experiments,—yes, and failed in them, too. For

example : God said to Israel by Isaiah, “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it ? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes.”

Studying, then, God’s management of the world in past ages, we may think of the period between the Fall of man and the Deluge, as a time in which men were left almost wholly to themselves. So far as we can know, there was but little of divine interference in their affairs. They possessed a knowledge of good and evil, of right and wrong ; and were left with but little more than this, to work out their own destiny, both for this world and the world to come.

This, if we could accept the views of many philosophers,—so called,—of modern times, ought to have been “the golden age” of the world. There was no priestcraft then ;—there were no cramping, fettering religious creeds ; there was no “Bibliolatry ;”—indeed, we may imagine that there was nothing to prevent any man, or all men, from being just as good, and pure, and noble, as he, or they, might please to be. And yet, somehow, men were not good in those days :—that was not a time of Arcadian simplicity and innocence :—that was not “the golden age.” Instead of this, “the earth became filled with violence,—for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and

that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Plainly the experiment of leaving the world with no religion but that of nature was a failure, a signal, utter failure. The deluge expressed God’s thought of the result of it.

Doubtless, things would have gone better, and the result been entirely different, but for one fatal difficulty ; a difficulty which the philosophers mentioned seem always to overlook,—but one which must not be overlooked if we would understand the true philosophy and the history of human life ; viz., man is a fallen being ; he has lapsed from his original state ; instead of being upright, he now leans heavily toward sin and wrong, showing that the innate tendencies of his nature are depraved.

The next great period and experiment began at the deluge, and is sometimes called The Patriarchal Dispensation. In this period each father of a family appears to have been regarded as, not only the head and ruler of the family, but also as its priest. This was, doubtless, by divine appointment. The father was, in a degree, a mediator between God and his descendants and dependents. By him sacrifices were offered, and instruction in religion given. In many instances, these Fathers, or Patriarchs, were good, holy men, and were admitted to friendly and even intimate relations with God, receiving direct revelations from him. We must believe that the influence of religion, in this form, was deeply and

widely felt. There was an antiseptic, a preservative, power in it that must have checked the progress of moral decay and corruption.

Still the tendencies of human nature were the same that they had been, and if we look upon the human race as a whole, we shall see that instead of progression in holiness and a moral elevation of the man, there was retrogression from God and righteousness, and a rapid moral degradation. It is nearly certain that the sons of Noah were not all dead before the heads of families, themselves, had mostly forsaken the worship and service of God and had become idolaters. Melchizedec and Abraham appear to have stood alone in their uprightness. And when, a few centuries later, the time comes for a change in God's plan of working, we look in vain for a sign that there was on the broad earth a pure altar or a holy priest unto Jehovah. The knowledge of God was not quite lost, and faith in God was not quite dead, among the Hebrew slaves of the Egyptians, and this is all that can be said.

The Patriarchal plan was not a success.

Next followed what is called the Mosaic dispensation.

The prominent feature of God's plan, in this period, was the selection of the Children of Israel to be, as a nation, the repository of his revealed law, and a perpetual light amid the surrounding moral darkness. In carrying out this plan, he separated the Israelites from other nations by the rite of cir-

cumcision ; he gave them the Law written on tablets of stone with his own finger, sanctioning it by all the terrible manifestations of Sinai and the desert ; and then, trained them in obedience for forty years before he brought them into Canaan. Then, he made their worship of him impressive by all the stately ceremonies of the Tabernacle and Temple. He sent to them prophets and teachers of the most exalted character, and gave through them most abundant revelations of his will, and these he confirmed by miracles. To some of these teachers he spoke face to face as one talks with a friend. He gave the people a good land and showered abundant blessings upon them. Surely he had a right to expect success, at least with the Israelites. He had a right to expect them to be faithful to him, and that they would become a permanent and ever-increasing light amid the world's gloom. But did they do it ?

There is no sadder thing, in the world's history, than the record of Israel's backslidings and wanderings from God. So far were the people from being faithful to their privileges and duties, that their whole history is filled with their rebellion and idolatries. They exhibited in a remarkable degree the bad tendencies of human nature. They continually broke over the restraints of God's righteous law, and emulated with zeal all the wickedness of the heathen around them. They went on from bad to worse, until their land became like a charnel-house, full of festering corruption, and Jerusalem,

their sacred city, a very plague spot, that could be cleansed only by fire. Finally, the crucifixion of Jesus was, at once, the culmination of their guilt, and the end of the Dispensation.

Well might the LORD say: "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes brought it forth wild grapes." The experiment was a failure, and the vineyard was dugged up.

But let me not be misunderstood. In speaking of the Patriarchal and Mosaic Dispensations as failures, I do not mean that they did not accomplish good, nor even that they did not do what God expected of them; but merely that, considered as expedients for bringing the world under God's rule, and making mankind submissive to his will, they were failures, utter failures. In another way they were a success. Good men, eminently holy men were trained under them, and fitted not only for God's service, but for heaven. The antediluvian world had its Enoch and its Noah:—the Patriarchal Age, its Melchizedec and its Abraham;—the Law, its Moses and Elijah;—and in one of the darkest periods of Israel's backsliding, there were yet found seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

And yet, must we not believe that, in some sense, the truly good people of all those ages were saved by the gospel? Jesus said that Abraham saw his

day and was glad thereof. Every altar that was built, and every sacrifice that bled, was an index finger pointing to Christ. The tabernacle and the temple with all the ritualistic service connected with them, foreshadowed the gospel. And beyond question the Holy Spirit has visited the earth in all the ages, and in many hearts has been welcomed as an abiding guest. In such hearts he has wrought the blessed change we call regeneration. Is it too much to claim that all who have ever been saved have been saved by the gospel?

Well, be that as it may, this much is claimed for the gospel; that its plan of working is entirely different from that of the dispensations preceding it;—that regeneration is the central feature in its plan;—and that it is a success, and is to be increasingly a success, until the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

Jeremiah gives us the key note of the gospel, when he says:—“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was as a husband unto them, saith the LORD; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in

their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people."

Ah, this writing God's law upon the heart,—this going right into the very citadel and sanctuary of the life; this making one love the law, as the initiative step, and thus securing obedience as the outflow of the interior life,—this is the peculiarity of the gospel,—and this is Regeneration.

Surely, now, there is no need of urging the importance of the subject before us. Is there need that I should apologize for the proposed discussion of it? If so, I can only say again, that to me the subject is fresh and interesting, that I am enjoying the study of it, that I believe much may be truthfully said upon it that will be new to many Christian people—saying nothing of the impenitent,—and that I believe there are many ideas afloat in the religious world, in regard to it, which are not well digested, and some that are fatally untrue. Nor do I forget that my thoughts may seem to another crude and erroneous.

I can only beg the kind and candid attention of the reader, and his earnest prayer that our divine guide, the Holy Spirit, may lead him, and me, and all, into the full light of the truth as it is in Jesus, so that we may know "the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

- “ Holy Ghost the Infinite !
Shine upon our natures’ night
With thy blessed inward light,
Comforter divine !
- “ We are sinful, cleanse us, Lord ;
We are faint, thy strength afford,
Lost, until by thee restored,
Comforter divine !
- “ In us, for us, intercede,
And with voiceless groanings plead
Our unutterable need,
Comforter divine !
- “ Search for us the depths of God,
Bear us up the starry road
To the heights of thine abode,
Comforter divine.”

II.

REGENERATION NECESSARY.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
John, iii. 3.

NICODEMUS came to the Saviour with fair and complimentary speeches, evidently desiring and expecting to be thought well of by him. He was, no doubt, a reputable man among his people, and held a position of honor and influence. It was but natural for him to suppose that the Teacher from Galilee, who had begun to attract public attention, but who had as yet no followers among the great ones, the people of influence in the land, would receive him most cordially, and be glad to count him among his friends. He was not ready yet to be considered a disciple, therefore he came by night.

But so far from seeming flattered by the visit, or appearing to court the favor of his visitor, the Master met him with words that must have surprised, and even startled him exceedingly. It was as though he had said :—“Nicodemus, I understand you thoroughly, you are half convinced of my Messiahship, and wish to be in my confidence, and think that, by

and by you may wish a place in my kingdom :—You think yourself entitled to my favor because you are a moral man, a keeper of the law, and a lineal descendant of Abraham. But you must understand, once for all, that my kingdom is a spiritual one ; not at all a continuation, or restoration, of the Jewish ; and that no man, be he Jew or Gentile, can come into it unless he be born again. The rule admits of no exceptions. All must be so changed by divine power as to become spiritually new creatures ; so changed that they will live a new, a holy life.”

From all that appears, Nicodemus was a man in whose favor an exception could have been made, if one could have been anywhere. But none could be then ; nor can be now. The rule is a sweeping one, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Nor is this rule an arbitrary one, established without a clear necessity. It grows out of the nature and circumstances of the case. It is clearly taught in the scriptures ; it is also evident from human experience that,

The natural, unregenerate man lacks the perceptive faculties necessary to enable him to understand and enjoy God.

In I Cor., ii, 14, it is said, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” This passage is a plain one. It asserts that man in

his natural soul-life, (the word *ψυχικος*, of the original, here rendered "natural," refers to the soul, and describes its state, rather than that of the body or flesh,) is incapable, from the lack of the necessary faculties or powers, of understanding the spiritual things of the gospel. In other words, he is incapable of being a true servant and worshiper of God, because he cannot understand his relations to God. The hour has come when true worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. The day of forms and ritual observances, of altars and slain beasts, and priestly mediation, is gone. For him who would worship now, there is no priest lower than Jesus. Through him, each man must for himself draw near to God. But without divine aid he cannot, because his mind is dark in regard to the things of God.

This lack of perceptive faculties is compared to blindness and deafness. Jesus said of the Pharisees, "they are blind leaders of the blind." Paul, writing to the Ephesians, speaks of the Gentiles as "having the understanding darkened;" and to the Christians he says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened," etc. In his speech before Agrippa, he says of himself, that he was sent to the Gentiles to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light. Isaiah speaks of those who, in the day of Christ, will be called to come to him, as "the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears." Of course we must not understand this

blindness as an intellectual one. It is blindness of the heart. And yet the heart does often affect the intellect strangely. Unregenerate men get strange ideas of God. Besides, it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness ; and the heart of an unregenerate man can no more receive and enjoy God as a friend, a father, or an object of true and loving worship, than one born blind can understand and enjoy the beauties of color in the summer landscape.

This same lack of perceptive faculty is indicated in those scriptures which speak of men as dead ; such as Eph. ii, 1, 5. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,”—“even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” Now, it is not true that men are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, in such a sense as that they have no moral capacity, can attain to no moral excellence. Beyond question they may, without regeneration, without even the gospel, be benevolent, conscientious, honest, truthful, kind and affectionate.

But it is true that all men, even the very best, who are living “the life of nature,” are so separated from God by wicked works, by trespasses and sins, that they seem at a distance from him, and to have no spiritual relations with him, yet God is the true and proper life of every soul. And all separated from him are dead, spiritually dead. It was in this sense that Adam died in the day of his first sin ;

and in this sense all his children are dead. So the life which the gospel gives is a revealing, and contemplating of God in the soul. “This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

Christian experience, too, as well as the scriptures, speak decisively on this point. Nearly every one who truly knows and loves God, is conscious of having passed through a spiritual change that was like awaking out of sleep, or being raised from the dead. He knows how, feelingly to quote the words of the man whose eyes Jesus opened, “Whereas I was once blind now I see.” It is true that there are exceptions to this rule. There is, now and then, one who is brought to the knowledge of God so young, that he seems almost to have been a Nazarene from his mother’s womb. He seems to grow into a true and saving faith, and into such love for, and consecration to, God that we cannot doubt his being alive in Christ. But these exceptions, here and there, prove nothing against the rule. Most Christians remember well that when the morning dawned in which they were first able to see God as their Father, and Christ as their Saviour, it seemed to them as though they had awaked in a new world. Everything was different from what it had been. The Bible was to them a new book; and the conversation of Christian people about God and his dealings, once as uninteresting as an unknown tongue, had now come

to be more sweet and attractive than any earthly pleasure.

What would heaven have been to them before the opening of their spiritual eyes ; before this quickening of their souls ? Would God's presence have been a joy ? Was it even possible for them to have been true and faithful servants of God on the earth ? Certainly not. The service which God requires is loving, trustful service. To love God and trust him, believe on him, one must be born again.

Again,—*Mankind have ever, in all times and places, exhibited a tendency to forget God and lose even an intellectual knowledge of him.*

God has taken especial care to reveal himself, to make himself known to his intelligent creatures in this world. By his works he has manifested his existence, his wisdom, his goodness and his power. And from time to time, all along down through the ages, he has made special revelations of his will. But Paul says of the heathen that “they do not like to retain God in their knowledge,” and the careful student of human history will be impressed with the conviction, that men everywhere, in all the ages, have found it casier to forget than to remember him. It is not necessary that we should depend upon Bible history for illustration of this. We may look over the lands where in past centuries the gospel was preached in all its fullness. We can take those, if we will, where it is known that the apostles themselves preached. Over some of them Mohammedan-

ism has swept like a devouring flame, destroying almost all vestiges of a pure gospel. We may leave such ones out, as not fair illustrations; although Mohammedanism itself is hardly anything but a corruption of Christianity. Take others—the countries where the Greek church prevails. Has the light of truth and holiness remained there? The people are Christians in name; and are sufficiently devout in their worship of pictures of the Virgin Mary and the Saints. They are in truth as much idolaters as the worshipers of Guadama, and are found to-day quite as inaccessible as they, to the truth and principles of the Bible. Take the countries ruled by Rome—they are in a condition almost equally bad. Spain is idolatrous, and France infidel to-day. Other popish countries in both Europe and America are indifferently better or worse. Look at Germany—over which the Reformation of Luther's time swept so gloriously. Lutheran Germany needs to-day to be redeemed from rationalism and infidelity as much as it did from Popery when Tetzels hawked indulgences through its towns. Look anywhere, everywhere, and you shall see that in the most favored spots, in those where the Sun of Righteousness has shone in its meridian glory, unless there has been a constant struggle on the part of those who truly love God, to keep the gospel before the minds of men, and a constant pouring of the Holy Spirit into the souls of men in regeneration, there has been a constant and certain flowing in of irreligion

and infidelity. In our own country there is many a place where the churches have been strong, and almost controlling in their influence, and yet now, spiritism and universalism and infidelity have taken almost entire possession.

The tendency of human nature to backslide from God finds as true, and almost as striking illustrations now as were furnished by the Israelites when they murmured against God and Moses on the shore of the Red Sea; made a calf and worshiped it at the foot of Sinai; joined in the idolatry of the Midianites before they were fairly out of the desert; and were bowing down to the gods of the Canaanites before the swords of Joshua and his army were hardly dry. The plain, clear teaching of all this cannot be mistaken. Fallen human nature exhibits no affinity for God, but a tendency, constant and strong, to turn away from and forget him. And there is no remedy but in the New Birth;—in hearts renewed in love, and made and kept alive unto God by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Another reason why regeneration is necessary is, *mankind do not naturally love God, but are in heart opposed to him.*

In Rom. viii. 7, it is said, “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” This is strong language; and no doubt there are many who think it should be softened in some way, rather than be taken according to the full force of the words. But let us

suppose ourselves to be standing in the place called Golgotha, on the morning when Jesus was led forth to be crucified ; let us remember that he who now comes bearing his cross, wearing a crown of thorns, and seeming the especial object of the hatred and malicious persecution of the crowd, is God's well-beloved Son—yes, more—is “God manifest in the flesh ;” let us reflect, that through his whole life as a man he has been, not merely inoffensive, but kindly, lovingly benevolent, and that his only offence has been that he has set God's claims and purposes before the people in a way not congenial to their feelings, and we can but feel that the scene shows up human nature in a terrible light, and fully justifies the words of the Apostle. Those people, who so madly cried “Crucify him ! Crucify him !” were not worse, so far as appears, than other people of other climes and times. They were sinful men in rebellion against God ; the preaching of Jesus had disturbed their consciences, and threatened to interfere with their ambitious schemes ; this made them hate him, and so against him they raised a cruel, bloodthirsty mob, and persecuted him unto death. In doing this they were representatives of their race,—of mankind,—and their sin was the sin of human nature.

But there are many persons who know themselves unregenerate, who yet honestly think they love God, and feel sure that under no circumstances could they have joined in persecuting Jesus or his followers.

Yes, there are many such ;—but, it is probable that this class are mostly in prosperity ; God’s providence seems to favor their views and wishes ; they think he is kind to them, and so mistake a pleasant, complacent, friendly feeling toward him for love.

Let circumstances be changed ; let adversity come, let their cherished plans be frustrated, their hopes be blasted, an idolized child, or companion, or friend be taken from them, and if they think of God at all, as appointing their lot, they will probably find their feelings undergoing an important change. Satan did not appear to understand Job, but he did understand human nature when he said to the Lord, “ Put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”

If these persons or any others would test their love to God, let them inquire how love—true, real love—manifests itself ; and then, if their love to God manifests itself in the same ways. Doing this, they will observe, that,

All true love is consecrating. Observe it when we will, we see that love delights in giving its treasures and its service to the beloved one, and instinctively seeks to please that one. Love which does not do this is a sham. Now, do they seek earnestly, day by day, to serve and please God ? Do the unconverted people of the world generally do this ? Certainly not. In their daily plans and purposes God’s will is not a consideration. They do not inquire what it is,—and if it be forced upon their

attention, they pay little or no regard to it. It is true that there are multitudes in every land who are ready to give to religion, but they give with the idea that there is merit in giving. If we could rid them of this thought, we should find few givers, or toilers, or burden-bearers for God, except among those who are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” But, again,—

Love delights in the society of the loved one. This is always so, and we may be sure that all who truly love God seek his society—seek communion with him, and when he is absent or seems absent, long for his presence. They long too for the time when they may see him face to face. They understand the feeling of the Psalmist when he sung, “As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God ! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God !”—Now God has promised that those who seek him truly and earnestly shall not seek in vain. He has promised to manifest himself to them, and he does it, in their closets, and especially in the place where two or three of them have met in his name. But the people of the world generally do not seek him, do not desire communion with him. They may pray ;—they may have a natural, almost an instinctive desire to worship ; they have filled the earth with temples and altars, and made innumerable forms of prayer, which they have repeated with such constancy that from age to age, the sound of them has

never ceased. And yet they have never in any age, or in any land, shown a natural love for the spiritual worship of the gospel. To-day, after eighteen centuries of gospel influences, the number who truly “worship the Father in spirit and in truth,” seems comparatively small. Men appear to love to pray, just in proportion as prayer is a form, and is supposed to be in some degree meritorious. They do not either seek for, or understand spiritual communion with a holy God.

Other tests of love will occur to the minds of all thoughtful persons, in connection with this question, but it is not necessary to notice them here. It is abundantly evident that men do not naturally love God, and that they need to be changed in heart before they can ever dwell with him.

Jesus said, “If any man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.” If the Father and the Son do come to us; if they are revealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; then we may be sure not only that we love God, but that we are born of God, and are saved. Then for us heaven is begun on earth. But, “he who loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love,” and for such a one there is no heaven, in this world or that which is to come.

But—*Mankind do not in their natural state trust God; but on the contrary, unbelief is one of the marked features of fallen human nature.*

This lack of trust, of faith, many regard as a

thing wholly involuntary and of course as not culpable. They appear to think that it arises wholly from lack of evidence, and that the will has nothing to do with it. God very evidently sees the matter in a different light. He not only regards unbelief as sin, but appears to think it the great sin of the world. Let us reflect that God is to be our Judge, and we must stand or fall as he decides, not by our own opinions.

But in what the gospel calls faith, there is unquestionably a strong element of will ; and because the will is prompted by the heart—the affections—it is spoken of as a thing of the heart, rather than of the mind. “ With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” So wherever the gospel comes, a lack of faith in God, and especially in Christ, is regarded as implying, not a lack of evidence but a state of the heart, such that under its guidance the will is in opposition to God.

The experience of all Christians is that when the heart is changed so that it comes to be in harmony with God, then faith,—trust, perfect trust—is easy. A state of trust becomes as much the condition and habit of the soul as unbelief was before. This, of itself, would seem to be conclusive against the idea that faith depends alone on evidence, because nobody supposes a regenerate person to be changed in mind, or intellect, from his previous state ; nor that by this change there is brought before his mind any new evidence. The mental eyes are opened by the willing heart ; that is all.

Taking this view of unbelief we shall not think it strange that the Holy Spirit, when sent into the world to convict men of sin, should charge them first and chiefly with this, that they do not believe on the Son of God. Wherever the gospel is faithfully preached “Jesus Christ is evidently set forth—crucified among” the people. There is no lack of evidence—no lack of light. But people turn from Jesus now, just as in the days of his flesh the Jews went away from the just opened grave of Lazarus, to plot how they might destroy him. Enmity—opposition of heart—was what hindered faith then, and prevents it still. Unbelief, then, is little else but rebellion against God, and so may well stand as representative of all sin.

An unbelieving, untrustful person is not a Christian, cannot be a true servant of God, and cannot possibly have a place in the heaven where God has prepared a home for those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. For such a one, heaven would be a place of misery rather than of joy, and his presence there could not but be an element of disturbance and sorrow. There will be none such there. Every one who finds a home in the “many mansions” will have passed through a change which will make it impossible for him to do otherwise than trust God with all his heart. That change is not death, but the new birth.

Another reason why man must be born again is found in the fact, that,

All men are naturally selfish, and so unfit for heaven.

Selfishness in heaven ! The very thought startles one ! If selfishness reigned in heaven as it does on earth, heaven would be only another hell. On earth it has been like the fabled box of Pandora, out of which all evils sprang. Selfishness is but another name for sin. Its very essence consists in this, that God is dethroned in the temple of the heart, and self reigns in his stead. In its practical working among men, selfishness may be so veiled and disguised that its true character hardly appears. It may even seem to men almost a virtue. Indeed it is true, that men seldom blush to confess themselves selfish. It is quite generally thought that selfishness is not only universal but necessary. And yet, it is not only the bane of almost every human relation, but it has totally separated man from his God. But for its rise in their hearts, Adam and Eve would have remained sinless. But for it, there would have been no lying, no double dealing, no cheating, no theft or robbery, no jealousies, backbitings and quarrels among neighbors ; none of that lust for power which has filled the earth with violence ; wars, with the oceans of blood and tears which they have caused to flow, would not have been, and earth would have been still a paradise. And, but for it, there would be now no difficulty in bringing about a reconciliation between man and his God. Just so soon as any soul is self-renounced, and from the

heart obedient to the law of love, God comes to dwell in it, and it dwells in God.

But will the regeneration of a soul produce this self-renunciation and obedience? Most certainly it will, and does, where it is a completed work. The very essence and meaning of the change is, that love—Christian, holy love, takes the place of selfishness in the heart. “Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.” Love and selfishness are opposites, are antagonistic principles. The reason why so little love and so much selfishness is manifested among those who profess to be Christians, is that the regeneration, if begun in them, is not a completed work as yet. They “are yet carnal, and walk as men.”

Once more,—*The nature of man is not only bad, but there is a manifest tendency to grow worse, to deteriorate and corrupt itself more and more.*

There are those who deny this, and claim that human nature possesses in itself recuperative moral powers which are equal to its needs, and which will eventually lift the race to purity and happiness. It would be useless to quote from the Bible to this class of persons,—philosophers they are called, because they do not believe the Bible. It has to them no more authority than any other book. They are in fact its opposers. But we may ask them to note and explain the fact that there is nowhere on the wide earth a known spot, where these restorative forces have done the work claimed for them, and

lifted a nation, a tribe or even a neighborhood, to moral purity and happiness, without the aid of the gospel. We may ask them why it is that in spite of the admitted and boasted excellence of the moral precepts of Brahminism and Boodhism, the moral atmosphere of India and China is pestiferous with festering corruption. The atmosphere of the far-famed Black Hole of Calcutta was not more deadly to its inmates than is the moral atmosphere of all heathen lands to the souls of men. We may also ask our friends to tell us how, according to their theory, it has come to pass that congregated masses of mankind, such as great cities and great armies, have usually been hotbeds of vice and sin.

The truth seems to be that a philosopher who studies human nature only where the full light of the gospel shines, and where its restraining and saving influences are felt by every individual, or one who retires to a hermitage, and dreams of what men might be, is very likely to be misled on this question.

To most of us the Bible is authority. We will turn to its teachings. And we will do this with double confidence, because it is a mirror in which human nature is most perfectly reflected. Studying it, we cannot fail to observe how the people who lived before the flood corrupted themselves. It was but a little time after they became numerous, before it is said of them, that "the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of

the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. vi, 5. Why was this? If there had been a tendency in human nature toward the cure of its own moral maladies, like the power of life in the physical man, the power that physicians call the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, the result would have been different. If there had been even life enough to prevent decay, and hold things as they were, the deluge would not have been rendered necessary. But there was no spiritual life. Men were "dead in trespasses and sins;" and so the natural tendency was to moral putrefaction and rottenness.

After the deluge things were hardly different. The descendants of Noah became very wicked in a little time, so that God said of them, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Even the Israelites, though chosen by the Lord as his peculiar people, and from age to age kept almost constantly under the restraints of priestly and prophetic teachings, showed this fatal tendency to backslide and seek the ways of sin, so fully that it seems the most remarkable trait of their history. We are again reminded that God said of them, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes." Isa. v, 4. As the centuries rolled by they became so corrupt that even their religious teachers were utterly abandoned. Jeremiah says of them, "I have seen also in the proph-

ets of Jerusalem an horrible thing, they commit adultery, and walk in lies ; they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness ; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah." Jer. xxiii, 14.

Paul, in Rom. i, ii, iii, gives a most terrible picture of the moral condition of the heathen world of his day. That that picture is true now,—that there has been no improvement in heathenism for eighteen hundred years, is proved by the concurrent testimony of missionaries and others who have spent their lives on heathen ground. Rev. M. J. Knowlton, of Ningpo, China, speaking of the passage alluded to, says,—“It is a picture so faithful, so true to the life, that heathen in every land acknowledge its correctness as applied to them ; and there have been instances where the heathen have charged the missionaries with writing these passages from the living examples present before them. It would be impossible to find language more exact and appropriate to describe the sins of the Chinese, as I have become acquainted with them by a long residence among them, than that used by the apostle. And I believe the same statement would be made by every missionary in every heathen land.”

Our Lord called his disciples, “The salt of the earth.” He must have meant by this, that they were to exert—that he expected them to exert, an antiseptic, a preservative influence upon the world.

He evidently felt that such an influence was called for, that something was needed to check the bad and corrupting tendencies of human nature. We cannot doubt but that he knew what was needed. This preservative influence God's children have always exerted. Wherever they have gone, carrying the gospel, the tide of evil has been stemmed, and to some extent rolled back.

And yet, even in Christian lands, regeneration, the renewing of the soul in love, attended as it must be by the present, indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, is indispensable to the success of the gospel. Wherever this has ceased to be preached, and believed in, and experienced, there have been backsliding and formality, and religious deadness—"the salt has lost his savor."

We conclude then, that fallen man is morally bad and tending to grow worse,—bad in the aggregate and bad in each and every individual case; and that there is for him no remedy, and no hope but in such a change as the new birth. And the words of Jesus, "Ye must be born again," ought to ring perpetually in the ears of every human being.

"SINNER, art thou still secure?
Wilt thou still refuse to pray?
Can thy heart or hands endure
In the Lord's avenging day?
See His mighty arm made bare!
Awful terrors clothe his brow!
For his judgment now prepare,
Thou must either break or bow.

“ Lord, prepare us by Thy grace,
Soon we must resign our breath,
And our souls be called to pass
Through the iron gate of death.
Let us now our day improve,
Listen to the gospel voice ;
Seek the things that are above ;
Scorn the world's pretended joys.”

Newton.

III.

RITUAL REGENERATION.

“If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” *Col. ii. 20.*

PROF. AUSTIN PHELPS, in his work on “The New Birth,” says:—“We must rank among the tokens of intellectual disease, we must regard as a degradation in a civilized mind, that taste which leads one to protrude a Christian baptism, or the imposition of consecrated hands, or the profession of a Christian creed, or communion with a Christian church, or the reception of the Lord’s Supper, in advance of that work of God’s spirit by which a sinner is born again. It seems like solemn trifling to debate on such a faith.”

This is strong language ; and however much we may sympathize with the feeling which prompted it, we may well hesitate about adopting it. The truth is, that ritualism is too firmly rooted in the Christian church to be put down by contempt, or brushed out of one’s way by a sneer. We must, with Dr. Doddridge, “acknowledge that many learned and pious divines have taught and con-

tended, that regeneration, does in the strictest propriety of speech signify baptism,—so that no unbaptized person how well disposed soever, can properly be said to be regenerated ; whereas that title may justly be given to all who have been baptized, however destitute they might have been of Christian faith and holiness, when they received the ordinance, or however grossly they may since have forfeited the final blessings of a regenerate state.” The Doctor says farther :—“ I readily own that the word has this sense in the generality of the Christian writers from about the middle of the second century.”

Here is a great fact that demands candid study. If this error has been so widely spread, and has been so tenacious in its hold upon the intellect and heart of Christendom, it must be that it is of a natural growth, and has roots that run deep into the soil of human nature. We shall find this to be true ; and we shall also find it true that it is a part, and a necessary part of a religious system, which not only has been strong in past ages, but is now exceedingly strong all over Christendom, and is struggling with a vigor that seems youthful, for the complete control of the Christian world.

When our Saviour said to the “ woman of Samaria,”—“ Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.—But, the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in

truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him,"—he indicated the great and radical difference between the worship of the gospel, and the worship of preceding dispensations. The great features of religion in the past days had been temples, and altars, and priests, and rites. In the future—in the gospel day,—all these were to disappear and be unknown. When Christ, dying upon the cross, uttered the words, "it is finished," the temple vail was rent asunder; and any special sanctity which had attached to the most holy place departed forever. Henceforth Christ, apprehended by faith, was the only true mercy-seat, and Christian hearts the only earthly abode of the Shekinah. From this time religion became a personal matter between God and each soul; and no priest or mediator but Jesus might be permitted to come between souls and God.

We cannot fix this distinctive feature of the gospel plan too firmly and clearly in our minds. We have need to fix it there, because the reaction against it in the Christian consciousness, which began very soon, we may say immediately, has continued and been very strong through all the ages until now.

If we ask why such a reaction has existed, we may easily discover two principal and sufficient reasons for it.

1. Most of the early converts to Christianity were Jews, and had a natural and very strong attachment to the faith and worship of their fathers.

They could not understand why that worship should be given up. The religion taught by Christ seemed to them supplementary to that of Moses. They were "all zealous for the law." Paul was almost wholly free from such feeling ; more than any other of the apostles he understood the deep meaning of the gospel, and well knew that all the old rites and ordinances had been nailed to the cross ; and yet, when, after many years of service in the apostolic ministry, he went up to Jerusalem, the pressure of the ritualism in the church there was so great upon him that he, too, must needs conform to the temple worship and submit to rites which he well knew had been abrogated long before. In this state of things it would follow as a matter of course that ritualistic ideas would become engrafted upon the gospel, and be propagated wherever Jewish influence extended ; and that in time a Christian ritual would grow up, embodying as much of Judaism as could be made in any way compatible with Christianity.

2. It is not easy for fallen human nature to understand and receive a purely spiritual religion. Men will become religious readily enough ; and there are but few people who are not more comfortable to be religious, if their religion be not too exacting. But when religion demands holiness of heart and of life, and brings the sinner face to face with God, the Holy One, multitudes draw back. They prefer a religion which can be carried on as much as possible by proxy, and therefore, desire a human

priesthood, and propitiatory rites ; and they like to have their religion and their daily life interfere with each other as little as possible ; and so, like the Galatians they “ observe days and times,” and “ works of the law.”

It does, certainly, seem strange that any influence should have been sufficient to mislead the disciples who were under apostolic teachings, but we know that the Galatians were “ bewitched ” and led away “ into another gospel ” by judaizing and ritualistic teachers ; and they do not appear to have been alone in this. Of course the influence of the apostles would restrain this bad tendency, and greatly aid to keep alive the spirituality of the churches ; and though “ the mystery of iniquity did already work,” it did not become a controlling power until after they were dead. Then “ grievous wolves ” entered in among the disciples—ambitious men, who, knowing that a priesthood is always more powerful than a simple ministry, fostered the tendency toward ritualism, in order that they might “ make a gain ” of the disciples, and fatten upon the flock of God.

We all know the result. We know that in less than one hundred years from the death of Paul, ritualism was firmly established as the dominant faith of the church. The church itself, as an organism, had become, in the apprehension of the people, the mystical body of Christ, out of which there could be no salvation. Baptism, from being a symbolic ordinance, illustrating regeneration, had come

to be regarded as regeneration itself. Irenæus—we shall recollect, was Bishop of Lyons, and one of the most eminent, and we may safely say evangelical church teachers of his day. His ministry was in the latter half of the second century. Neander says :—“Regeneration and baptism are in Irenæus intimately connected ; and it is difficult to conceive how the term regeneration can be employed, in reference to this age, to denote anything else than Baptism.” (Ch. Hist. Vol. I., p. 311.)

Very soon the priestly character of the ministry became firmly established ; and it was generally believed that consecrated hands could bestow or withhold, at pleasure, the blessings of salvation. About the middle of the third century Cyprian was bishop of the church in Carthage, and the leader of the North African church. Speaking of his time Neander says :—“The error became firmly established that without external baptism no one could be delivered from that inherent guilt” (of original sin), “could be saved from the everlasting punishment that threatened him, or raised to eternal life ; and when the notion of a magical influence, a charm, connected with the sacraments continually gained ground, the theory was finally evolved of the unconditional necessity of infant baptism. The only question that remained was, whether the child ought to be baptized immediately after birth, or not till eight days after, as in the case of the rite of circumcision. The latter was the opinion of

bishop Fidus who proposed the question in a council convened at Carthage. Cyprian answered it in the year 252, in the name of sixty-six bishops. He said : —“None of us could agree to your opinion. On the contrary it is the opinion of us all, that the mercy and grace of God must be refused to no human being so soon as he is born ; for since our Lord says in his gospel, ‘The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s souls but to save them,’ Luke ix : 50, so everything that lies in our power must be done that no soul may be lost. As to what you say, that the child in the first days of its birth is not clean to the touch, and that each of us would shrink from kissing such an object, even this, in our opinion, ought to present no obstacle to the bestowment of the heavenly grace ; for it is written, ‘To the pure all things are pure ;’ and none of us ought to revolt at that which God has condescended to create. Although the child be but just born, yet it is no such object that any one ought to demur at kissing it to impart the divine grace.’” (Ch. Hist. Vol. I., p. 313.)

This is remarkable language. It is wonderful that it should have been used by an intelligent Christian bishop so soon after the days of Paul. It is still more wonderful, that in a large council, embracing the leading and most influential pastors of a large and important section,—perhaps the most important section, of the church, there was no dissent from such opinions. Fidus does not appear as a dissentient, only he thought baptism should follow

the same rule in regard to age, with that laid down for circumcision. It shows conclusively that the idea of baptismal regeneration had become fully established ; and that the communication of divine and saving grace had come to be regarded as a part of the official work,—in some sense as a prerogative of the ministry.

After this, it was only necessary that the Lord's Supper should be changed into a sacrifice of the real body and blood of Jesus for the benefit of certain specified persons, and then the elements of hierarchical power would be completely developed, and priestly rule established in the church. This came about in a little while, and "the Man of Sin" was revealed,—“that Wicked—whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

From the third century to the present time, the Catholic church, so called, has never wavered on the doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

It certainly is very strange that such men as Augustin and Chrysostom, with their truly evangelical tendencies, should not have freed themselves from the bondage of such an error. But we must remember, that with them church tradition was of almost equal authority with the Scriptures, and in their day church tradition had established the idea that without water baptism there could be no salvation. Chrysostom says :—“It is for this reason we baptize also infants, though they are not, like

others, stained with sin, that so holiness, justification, adoption, heirship and brothership with Christ, may be imparted to them through Christ, that so they may be members of Christ." (Neander, Ch. Hist. Vol. iii. p. 666.) Augustin does not, so far as I have been able to learn, speak out so fully in regard to what baptism was believed to do, but it is evident that he believed in its divine efficacy. Speaking of the baptism of infants he says :—"The faith of the church, which consecrates infants to God in the spirit of love, takes the place of their own faith ; and albeit they possess as yet no faith of their own, yet there is nothing in their thoughts to hinder *the divine efficacy*." (Neander, Ch. Hist. Vol. ii. 670.)

But was there no revolt, in the Christian consciousness of those ages, from this doctrine ? Yes ; but it must be looked for among the sects who, from time to time, separated themselves from the general Church ; and these sects we know so little about, except through their enemies, that it is as well, perhaps, to say nothing about them. Of the Paulicians, it is probably as certain as any thing in history, that they wholly rejected baptismal regeneration, and even regarded water baptism as of no value and not required. It is said that they permitted priests of the Greek and Roman churches, who had been taken captive by them, to baptize their children ; but, so far as appears, they never themselves practiced infant baptism. In the tenth

and eleventh centuries they became very numerous ; it is said that more than one hundred thousand of them perished by persecution during the short reign of the Empress Theodora,—and, scattered by the persecution, they spread over Europe, giving rise to the Albigenses and other sects that in the following ages protested against the errors and corruptions of the church.

Of these sects we know almost nothing except what comes to us from their persecutors. So much as this we know, that many of them rejected infant baptism,—some rejected water baptism altogether,—and believed that none could be members of the true church but believers who lived holy lives. This caused them to be very widely called Cathari or Puritans.

In the twelfth century, the numbers and influence of these protestants against a corrupt hierarchy became greatly increased. Such leaders arose among them, as Peter of Bruys, Henry of Clugny, Peter Waldo and Arnold of Brescia. These and others declaimed loudly against the errors which prevailed in regard to the church sacraments, and especially against transubstantiation and baptismal regeneration. They are most of them accused of rejecting infant baptism,—holding it a worthless ceremony,—and of rebaptizing those who became believers. They were terribly persecuted, but their views spread rapidly, and soon many countries in Europe were filled with their followers.

During the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries the fires of persecution were kept constantly ablaze, and often tens of thousands of humble and inoffensive men and women perished in a single year. Why was this? It was chiefly because these poor people struck daring and effective blows against the established church, and endangered the whole hierarchical system. That church, that system, was built upon the dogma of baptismal regeneration, and when these men preached, from the New Testament, that the Church of Christ was composed of true believers only, it was felt that their mouths must be stopped, or the ritualistic edifice would crumble down. They could not be put down by argument, or appeal to the scriptures, for they were more than a match for their opposers; and so the sword, the sack, and the fagot were resorted to.

Early in the sixteenth century the Reformation began. In 1520, the Pope issued the Bull of Excommunication against Luther, and Luther publicly burned it; thus breaking forever with Rome. But, in leaving Rome, the leading reformers did not give up the Romish idea of the church. The bride of Christ,—the body of Christ,—the church, was still to them a visible organized earthly body; and the church sacraments were still held to possess divine efficacy. Luther, with his compeers, and the English reformers held stoutly to baptismal regeneration, and opposed and persecuted those who denied

it, and rejected infant baptism, with a zeal and bitterness worthy of Rome herself.

This may well seem strange to us. And yet, if we recall Luther's extreme bitterness toward Zuinglius and the Swiss reformers on account of a difference in regard to the Lord's Supper, we shall not wonder at his attempting to crush what he thought a great heresy. The truth is, Luther was a natural Autocrat. Had he been Pope, instead of reformer, he would have been a second Hildebrand. Nor need we wonder at his clinging to baptismal regeneration. To have renounced it would have placed him almost with the Anabaptists, who were accounted to hold doctrines subversive, not only of the church, but also of the state. Some of whom, also, were, no doubt, wildly fanatical; and even the more moderate were, in their opinions too far ahead of their time to be tolerated. The leading reformers shrank away from them with repugnance, and kept as far as possible from their views.

As regards Calvin and the Swiss reformers, it would be too much, perhaps, to say that they retained baptismal regeneration in their creed. We know that they retained infant baptism, and regarded those who rejected it as pestilent heretics and subverters of the church. It appears, too, that they attached the idea of "divine efficacy" to the rite, and believed that those who had been baptized stood, somehow, in quite different relations to God from others.

At the present time, it is difficult even to approximate to a knowledge of the extent to which baptismal regeneration prevails as a belief in the churches. The position of the Romanists we know ;—that of the Episcopalians in England and this country is not doubtful ;—nor is that of the Lutherans ; although many of the German theologians would probably wish to qualify the term somewhat, if called upon to express their belief in it. It is gratifying, also, to know, that there are many Episcopalians who revolt against the use of the word “regenerate,” in the baptismal service for infants. But the high-churchmen are most consistent with their system. When baptismal regeneration is given up by “the church,” it ceases at once to be “the church ;”—its pretensions must be given up, and its ideal character will be totally changed.

Of the other pedit-baptist denominations, it is best, perhaps, to say nothing, because it is so difficult to ascertain what can be truthfully said. We know that very many parents do not wish to have their children baptized. We may be sure that many others regard the baptism of their children as merely a solemn and public consecration of them to God. Others, it is evident, think the relations of a baptized child to God are quite different from those of the unbaptized. Remarks dropped every now and then show that they think a baptized child much safer in the event of death than others.

It may be remarked, however, that these denominations are none of them very pronounced in their ideas of the visible church. Few among them are high-churchmen. And almost universally they use the term regeneration to signify a change of character and life, wrought in man, after coming to years of accountability, by the word and spirit of God.

Among the denominations that reject infant baptism as unscriptural, one, the Disciples, or Campbellites, holds undeniably to the identity of baptism and regeneration. Their teachings on this point are summed up by Dr. Jeter, in “Campbellism Examined” (page 196) as follows :—“The substance of the Reformation, on this point, as developed in the ‘Millennial Harbinger Extra,’ and perpetuated in the ‘Christian System,’ is this,—converts made to Jesus Christ by the apostles were taught to consider themselves pardoned, justified, sanctified, reconciled, adopted and saved. These terms are expressive, not of any moral quality, but of a state or condition. This change of state is effected, not by any change of views or of feelings, nor by faith, but by an act resulting from faith,—and this act is *Immersion*, called with equal propriety *Conversion* or *Regeneration*.

The Baptist denomination in America and in England is understood to stand opposed, as a body, to this idea of baptismal regeneration in all its forms.

But, in some parts of our country, there is an evident tendency towards a sort of high-churchism, and in connection with this we see every now and then a cropping out of the idea that there is, somehow, “a divine efficacy in baptism.”

Thus much in regard to the views which have been entertained as to the relations of baptism and regeneration. Before leaving the subject, however, it seems necessary to refer to the ceremony of confirmation.

This ceremony appears to be a relic,—the fossil remains of the apostolic custom of laying their hands upon the disciples when the Holy Spirit was imparted. In the ancient church it was connected with baptism and was regarded as a part of this rite. This connection remains in the Greek church. In the Roman church, children are expected to be confirmed at the age of seven years. Among others who practice it, it may take place at any time after the candidate has come to years of accountability. The precise relation which it sustains to regeneration in the minds of those who practice it is hard to define.

The scriptural basis, if there be one, for the doctrine of ritual regeneration, is found chiefly in three passages:—John iii: 5, “Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Tit. iii: 5,—“He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” and Eph. v: 26, “That he might

sanctify and cleanse it"—the church, "with the washing of water by the word." Of course, other scriptures are regarded as corroborative of these; and the analogy, or the supposed identity of the Jewish and Christian systems has done service in the same direction. But these passages are to this system, what the pillars of the temple of Dagon which Samson took hold of, were to that edifice; if they are taken away the system is overthrown. The simple and only question in regard to them is, do they refer to baptism? If this be admitted the argument is given to the ritualists. If it be proved, they have a citadel that is impregnable to all that their opponents can bring against them.

In the plan adopted for these Essays this does not seem the best place to introduce an exegesis of these texts; but one will be attempted by and by, and it is confidently believed that it can be shown that there is in them no reference whatever to baptism; and that they in no way support what is believed to be an unscriptural and pernicious error.

If now we glance backward over the path which we have been traveling, we can hardly fail to be impressed with the fact that regeneration, considered as a change of character and life, wrought by the word and Spirit of God, is comparatively a new doctrine in the written theology of Christendom. That it has always been believed in, and taught by some of God's children, we need not doubt, but we must believe that until a little more than one hundred

years ago, those who received and taught it, were almost without exception found among the persecuted and trodden down people who seldom wrote and whose few writings were diligently destroyed and then misrepresented, so that we know almost nothing of them; or else it was taught in a way to make it seem more like the growth of the Christian principle and feeling in the heart than a radical change wrought by God and originating a new life in the soul. Much in this way the mystics of the Roman church received it, and the Reformers must have held it so, or they would have been compelled to abandon the idea of regeneration by baptism.

In the great awakening in Old and New England under Whitfield, Wesley, and others, the doctrine of the new birth as an ascertainable change, became prominent in Christian theology, and since, has never lost its place there. We may hope and believe that it never will lose it; but will, with all gospel truth, become more and more free from surrounding and beclouding error, and shine ever more clearly and brightly until the gospel day is past and the last child of God is brought home to his Father's house.

“ Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites which God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to heaven.

“ The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace ;
Born in the image of his Son,
A new peculiar race.

“ The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,
Blows on the sons of flesh,
New-models all the carnal mind,
And forms the man afresh.”

Watts.

IV.

REGENERATION NOT A MIRACLE.

“ And God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness.” *Gen. i, 26.*

WHAT is a miracle ? “ Webster’s definition is,— A wonder, or wonderful thing ; a prodigy.—2, *In theology*, an event or effect contrary to the established constitution and course of things, or a deviation from the known laws of nature ; a supernatural event.” The Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge says,—“ A miracle, in a popular sense, is a prodigy, or an extraordinary event, which surprises us by its novelty. In a more accurate and philosophic sense, ‘ a miracle is a work effected in a manner unusual, or different from the common and regular method of providence, by the power of God himself, for the proof of some particular message, or in attestation of the authority of some particular divine messenger.’ ” Dr. Bushnell, in “ Nature and the Supernatural,” says of a miracle, “ It is a supernatural act, an act, that is, which operates on the chain of cause and effect in nature, from without the chain, producing in the sphere of the senses, some event which moves our wonder, and evinces the presence of more than human power.”

Now, according to these definitions, regeneration cannot be properly called a miracle, because,—

1. However wonderful the change may seem to one who is its subject, or to others who observe its effects, and however evidently it may appear to be the work of God, it is, yet, not so “within the sphere of the senses,” as to be properly a sign to unbelievers, or a sanction of any message or messenger of God.

We must not think of all the wonderful works of God as miracles. As I look out of my window this morning, I see that the buds on the trees are swelling, and the grass is springing, and the early flowers are opening to greet the returning spring. Now, there is not one of these things, nor of a thousand others around me, but is a wonderful thing, and most evidently a work of God, but they are not miracles; they are not novel; they are not especially for signs; and they are within the chain of cause and effect which God has established in the world. And this leads to the remark,—

2. That regeneration is not a miracle because it is a change wrought within the chain of cause and effect existing in a man's nature; and not a change wrought upon the man from without that chain. In other words,—

Regeneration is a change contemplated and provided for in the moral constitution of man.

When, in the process of creation, God said,—“Let us make man in our image,” it is evident that he intended to make a noble creature;—a creature

very different from anything made before. What did he make? What sort of creature is man? How does he bear the image of God?

Perhaps it will be said,—man does not bear the image of God now; that should not be taken into the account in estimating man; he lost the image of God when he fell. But did he? Then why did God say to Noah, many centuries after the fall,—“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man?” Would he have used such language if his image had been long since obliterated? Assuredly not. The meaning is,—“you may slay with impunity and without guilt, any animal that I have made, as your need may require, but the life of man is sacred, because he bears the image of his Creator; and every murderer must be put to death; I require it.”

The idea that God’s image in man consisted in holiness, and that he lost it in the fall, is perhaps a natural mistake; but it is, certainly, a mistake; because Adam and his wife were not, in any proper sense of the term, holy. They were upright, innocent,—nothing more. Holiness in any creature implies one of two things;—either sanctification, consecration, devotion to God and his service; or such a state of mind and heart as harmonizes with God, and necessitates the putting forth of all the forces of the being on the side of what is good and right and true. Now, Adam and Eve knew enough of

God, so that, had they been holy, whatever force of character they possessed would have been exercised in favor of God and against his traducer and enemy. They would have clung so strongly to him in love and trust that the universe would never have witnessed the sad, the pitiful spectacle of their turning away from him at the first temptation that assailed them. Eve gave up God for an apple,—Adam gave up God for his wife. People talk very loosely when they speak of holiness as merely the absence of sin.

Adam and his wife were made,—in the expressive metaphor of the scriptures,—“upright,”—just that. They stood squarely upon their own feet, and possessed the power of choosing whether they would cling to God and his service, or go after Satan and sin. Trial was necessary to develop them, and show their characters. It came,—and they fell. In their first sin they lost their uprightness ; and, from the hour of their sin, they leaned heavily away from God and holiness and toward selfish and sinful indulgence. This leaning toward evil their children have inherited ; and this constitutes depravity.

Perhaps some reader is saying just now—“Why did God make man so that he could fall so easily, and then expose him to temptation ? He knew that he would fall ; why did he not guard him so that he could not ?” But why not ask why God made man at all ? This is the better question. When man was made it was not possible for God himself to hinder him from exercising his power of choosing

evil instead of good, if it pleased him to choose thus. Does this startle you? Does it seem too bold an assertion? It certainly is reverently spoken. In God's infinitely wise plan of creation, it pleased him, when he had made all the lower animals, and fully prepared the earth, to make a being who might be his Vicegerent,—a ruler under himself, upon the earth. It pleased him that this being should be, as an animal, the perfected ideal of animal life;—a microcosm:—a creature in whom all the lower creatures should have at once their representative and their head. It pleased him also that this being should be a spirit, an intelligence, a creature of an independent, self-centered will, and so, belong to the realm of intelligences, of moral agents, of beings governed, not by natural laws, but by a revelation of his will. Because I am a man,

“I hold a middle rank 'twixt heaven and earth;
On the last verge of mortal being stand,
Close to the realms where angels have their birth,
Just on the boundaries of the spirit-land!
The chain of being is complete in me;
In me is matter's last gradation lost
And the next step is spirit—deity!”

Now, just because man is in the realm of spirits, intelligences, powers, because he is a moral agent, he must in the nature of things be left free from outward restraint, to choose for himself whether he would obey God's will or rebel against him.

No doubt God might have made a very perfectly developed animal, a sort of superior monkey—such as some men seem to dream that they are, and have given him no power to sin ;—held him bound as he holds the brute creation by the laws of nature and instinct ; but, between such a creature and man there would have been “a great gulf fixed,” an utterly impassable abyss. No ! depend upon it, we could not have the glorious position and possibilities of manhood, without its probation and its possibilities of fall and ruin.

But we will not forget that it is the regeneration of man, and his establishment in obedience and holiness, in which we are especially interested now. Nor will we forget that God has avowedly taken the initiative in this matter, and of his own motion is seeking to renew in righteousness and true holiness, his fallen, lost creature. Can this be done ? Can man be redeemed from sin, if he could not be kept from sin ? If God can come in, and act with coercive power without reference to the human will upon any heart, and change that heart as one is changed in regeneration ; then why could he not have exerted the same sovereign coercive power in keeping man from sin, or in saving all sinners as well as one ? There can be but one answer to this question. The exercise of coercive power upon a single human heart would be an abandonment of the principle of moral government and can never take place—never has taken place, notwithstanding

so many Christians talk about being forced into the kingdom of God, and think that there are passages in the scriptures which fully warrant them in speaking so. Such passages ought to be, and can be interpreted so as not to dishonor God or conflict with the principles of his moral government, and such experiences only show what is thought to be the proper form of expressing them.

It would seem that there should be no need to argue such a point as this. It ought to be self-evident to all that God must work, in regenerating a man, just as much in harmony with the principles of man's nature, and of his own moral government, as he works in harmony with natural laws in the procreation of a life of plant or animal. The careful and reverent student of God's works can hardly fail to find everywhere a law of adaptation which nicely adjusts means to ends, and part to its fellow part.

If, now, we turn to the record of the fall and study it carefully we shall not fail to see that although Eve, our mother, was very easily led astray, she seems to have yielded to temptation almost as easily as her sinful children have, yet when the tempter came to her,—and he was the arch-tempter,—mightiest of evil powers,—he was obliged to approach her covertly, with smooth and honied words of seeming truth, and artfully awaken appetite, and curiosity, and pride, before he could move her to his purpose. Weak woman that she was, while her will

kept the citadel of her heart, Satan had not power enough to enter it. He must corrupt the garrison, and persuade it to open the gates. Had she resisted the tempter, had she turned to her God in love and clinging trust, then she would have begun to be holy indeed, and the fortress of her soul would have been stronger than before the attack. Instead of this, she yielded to Satan, and as a consequence Satan now holds the gates of all unredeemed souls. In Bunyan's language, "Diabolus keeps the town of Mansoul."

And yet, although weakened, the fortress is not destroyed; and if it can be regained for God, holiness and salvation are yet possible in any and every case. Man still bears the image of his God, in that he is capable of independent moral action, and no being in the universe can rule his soul for a single moment without the consent of his will. To regain the fortress,—to win back the soul to allegiance to God, this is the object sought and gained in regeneration.

Observe, now, God's method in this work. He does not steal upon the soul in an unguarded moment, and take possession of it; he does not throw upon it an overpowering spiritual influence, and crush out opposition; but he does by the preaching of the gospel seek to awaken the sinner to a sense of his danger and need, and then points him to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. In connection with this, he sends the Holy Spirit,—

the blessed wind—breath—of heaven to blow away from the poor stupified soul the mephitic gases by which it is choked, and breathe into it a breath of the pure reviving air of truth; and then says “choose you this day whom you will serve.” Instead of coercing the soul, Jesus stands at the door and knocks, and asks admittance. He himself says,—“Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me.” But often he calls and knocks in vain;—stands and knocks “until his head is wet with the dew and his locks with the drops of the night,” and is rejected at last. “He comes unto his own and his own receive him not.” But, there are some who do receive him,—and such receive power to become the sons of God. As soon as he is admitted the same will-power which has been exerted against him is put forth for him; the servant of sin becomes the servant of God; the retainer of Satan becomes a soldier of Immanuel, and henceforth fights the good fight of faith.

Surely, in all this there is no miracle! So far as we can see, God’s work upon the man is only such a work as one intelligence may exert upon another, without for a moment suspending or overbearing the natural laws of the soul.

But there are other aspects of the question which we must consider.

Man bears the image of God,—bears it now,—in

this, that *he is one of the judges of the universe*. Every man, be he high or low in the scale of humanity, possesses a moral sense which enables him, nay, requires him to judge of the right and wrong, the good and evil, of all things that have moral character, which come before him. He must judge. He may not utter his opinions, he may be scarcely conscious that he forms any ; his opinions may be unsettled, may be biased, may be wholly wrong and worthless ; yet, still, he must judge, and must bear the responsibility of the right or wrong of his judgments.

By the way, is it not strange that so many intelligent men find it hard to see a clear line of demarcation between mankind and the brutes ? Of course, there are many very brutal men ;—and there are brutes that exhibit, now and then, an intelligence almost human ; but between the extremes on either hand, even when they most closely approach each other, there is an immeasurable distance. Every man not idiotic or lunatic, possesses a moral sense, and a likeness to his God, of which the animals show no trace. Even if we forget the moral sense, and only look at human reason, we shall see that where it rises into judgment, it is a thing totally different from the sort of instinctive reason we see in animals.

When one thinks of the powers that men are exhibiting, it becomes, sometimes, an exciting, and a proud thing, even to reflect that one is a man.

Think of Agassiz grasping firmly in his mind the facts, and through them the principles of almost universal nature; tracing, analyzing, and classifying such facts and principles, until he seems almost to hold the universe in his hand; think of Newton reaching up into the heavens and grasping the key that unlocked the mysteries of universal motion; think of Le Verrier, working out in his closet the problem that, in its result, demonstrated the existence and position of a planet which mortal eyes had never yet seen; think of Franklin and Morse lassoing the lightning and breaking it in to be their servant and run on their errands; think of Stevenson creating an iron horse, filling its bowels with fire and its lungs with steam, harnessing it to his chariot, and driving it with more than the speed of the wind; and suppress if you can a feeling of deep respect, of reverence for human nature, and exultation in the thought,—I too am a man! O, if man had not sold his birthright and debased and emasculated his powers by sin, what glorious possibilities there would have been in him! Even now he seems almost like a deputy creator working miracles constantly.

But when we think of human nature in its moral aspects, and see how it is everywhere prostituted to evil, our enthusiasm is repressed, and we turn sadly away from the spectacle that rises before us.

Regeneration is God's remedy for sin. Let us rejoice that there is a remedy,—and let us reverently study it, and promote it as we can.

In working this change in any soul, it pleases God to do what he does in response to earnest entreaty. He will have men come to him for help. Before he pardons sin, he will have sinners feel their guilt and danger. To make them feel it, he awakens their moral sense, and then before it, as before a judgment seat, he arraigns their heart and life. Will it be going too far to say that the spirit acts as God's attorney, explaining and applying the law, and aiding to call forward the testimony? We know that it is a part of his office to "convince of sin." We believe that it is a part of his work to awaken drowsy consciences and to plead God's cause before them. Such a trial, in such a case, can result only in one way. The sinner is convicted, condemned by his own judgment, and knows that his only hope is in flying to Christ for pardon. If he does this he will be pardoned and accepted in Christ. If he does not do it, "he is condemned already," by his own heart, and by God who is "greater than his heart, and knoweth all things."

But it may be said that all this is irrelevant to our subject; that awakening and conviction are not regeneration and no part of it; and this because, as has been admitted, one may be awakened and convicted, and yet never be regenerated. Certainly it is not claimed that all who are convicted of sin are truly born of God; but in the case of one who does come to Jesus, who is regenerated, is not the awakening and convicting a part of the work which

God does in bringing him, in drawing him to Jesus. If regeneration is a quickening of one dead, must not the awakening be a part of the quickening? If it be a conversion, or turning to the Lord, that which leads one to convert or turn is not to be overlooked as a part of the work wrought. Look at it as we will, God is the Alpha as well as the Omega of the work wrought in saving a soul; and none of us can say that the work of one moment is more essential or important than that of any other.

The truth is, most of us have always been accustomed to think of regeneration as the work of an instant, and a sort of miracle; and the assertion that God usually takes time and uses means in bringing it about is new, and possibly seems in some way to detract from God's glory. Let us hope that we may get rid of such fears, and come to see that not only is the growth of a tree quite as much the work of God as the thunder-stroke that destroys it, but that regeneration is quite as much the work of God when he uses his word, his children and his spirit in bringing it about, as it could be if wrought in any other manner.

But again, man bears the image of God, and is constitutionally adapted to receive divine and regenerating influences because *when God made him, he breathed into him the breath—pneuma—spirit of life*. This gave man a spiritual nature so related to that of his Creator, that communion was possible between them. This it is that renders it possible

now for the Holy Spirit to come and abide in us, and make our bodies his temple. It will need no miracle, it will be no miracle when he does come ; it will be only the carrying out of the original plan of the Creator ; a plan interrupted by man's sin, but still possible when the sinner repents, and opens his heart to the Heavenly Guest.

This more than everything else is the crowning glory of human nature. Yet how little the mass of mankind think of this ! how little they care for it ! They are like Bunyan's " man with the muck-rake," ever bent over with their faces toward the earth so that they cannot see the crown that is offered them, that is held within their reach. They toil and strive for lucre—lucre that often comes to them polluted, and that pollutes their souls, and neglect the noblest, truest riches. They are animals deeply conscious of animal wants and desires, and mainly occupied in ministering to them.

But the strangest, saddest thing is, that men are found who, with great zeal, ability, and perseverance, have set themselves to the task of proving themselves animals. Is this because " they do not like to retain God in their knowledge ? " If it is a shame to a man to indulge and pamper the animal side of his nature until it becomes his master, and he sinks as nearly as possible to the level of the brutes, it surely is a double shame for one in possession of exalted reason to occupy it in trying to prove himself a brute.

The coming of the Holy Spirit to abide in a soul is the completion of the work of regeneration, and the sealing of God's covenant with it. It can only take place when one has been convicted and has sought and found pardon in Christ, and has become truly submissive and obedient to God's will. Then in answer to believing prayer he will breathe himself in upon the human spirit, to hold and keep it submissive, loving, and obedient, by his imperceptible but effective presence.

Such an in-breathing—inspiration—is not possession. He, in whose heart the Spirit abides, does not surrender, in any degree, his own individuality, does not lose or sink one element of a true and proper manhood. We must believe that even the men who were moved by the Holy Ghost to write the Holy Scriptures, did not in the least lose their own proper individuality. Each man of them gave utterance to his thoughts and emotions in his own way, and was only conscious, we may suppose, of the superintendence of the spirit, and that he illuminated his mind and stimulated and increased all his powers. The style of the different writers was not at all the same ; each one exhibits traces of his mental training and habits, just as uninspired men do. Paul, and Peter, and John, are just as distinctively Paul, and Peter, and John in their writings, as they were in the freest and most unrestrained intercourse with familiar friends. The spirit in them, —and in every one who receives him—was like the

fire in the bush that Moses saw. "The bush was not burned." We must believe that every little twig and leaflet of it remained unscorched. So it is when the Holy Spirit comes to abide in a soul,—none of the soul's powers, perhaps we may say none of its idiosyncrasies, are changed, only as they are regulated and ennobled and purified.

This, we see at once, is a very different thing from what modern spiritists claim for their mediums. That if it is more than pretence and delusion, is possession, not inspiration. The theory is understood to be that, while the will of the medium and the faculties of his soul and body lie passive, a disembodied spirit comes in and takes possession of both physical and mental organs and uses them at its will. Now, inasmuch as it is an honor, and a high one, to a man that he has an independent will and is a responsible free-agent under God, it is a dishonor and a shame to him to become the passive tool of any being, be that being man, demon, or angel. If a good and wise man comes to me, and by communicating his own true and beautiful thoughts, and holy emotions, stimulates and feeds my mind and heart, I am grateful to him : if God sees fit to permit a good and wise spirit from "the better land" to do this, I am grateful and gladly accept his ministry. But if the noblest man on earth or an archangel from the highest heaven, were to ask me to become his "medium,"—to sink, for the time, my own personality, and permit him

to use my bodily and mental powers at his will, I would feel that my manhood was insulted by the request, and would cry, indignantly, no,—a thousand times, no !

But the climax of insane folly is reached when a man follows “the spirits” in religious things. Even if we admit that the “communications” are from spirits, it is not possible to know whether the spirits are good or bad, true or false. Surely men “love darkness rather than light.”

Inspiration by the Holy Spirit is not at all in this line. God never asks his intelligent creatures to stultify and make fools of themselves in his service. Indeed it may be truly said that one’s manhood can never be a completed, rounded-out, developed thing, until the Spirit does come and breathe himself in upon the willing, welcoming soul.

“ ABIDE IN ME.”

“ That mystic word of thine, O, sovereign Lord,
Is all too pure, too high, too deep for me ;
Weary with striving, and with longing faint,
I breathe it back again in prayer to thee.
Abide in me—o’ershadow by thy love
Each half-formed purpose, and dark thought of sin,
Quench ere it rise each selfish, low desire,
And keep my soul as thine calm and divine.
As some rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own—
So, when thou dwellest in a human soul,
All heaven’s own sweetness seems around it thrown.

The soul alone, like a neglected harp,
 Grows out of tune, and needs that Hand divine.
 Dwell thou within it, tune and touch the chords
 Till every note and string shall answer thine.
Abide in me :—there have been moments pure
 When I have seen thy face and felt thy power ;
 Then evil lost its grasp, and passion hushed—
 Owned the divine enchantment of the hour.
 These were but seasons beautiful and rare ;
Abide in me—and they shall ever be ;
 I pray thee now fulfill my earnest prayer,
 Come and abide in me and I in thee.”

V.

IS REGENERATION INSTANTANEOUS ?

“Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.”
I *Pet.* i, 23.

AMONG the Christian ministers, indeed, among Christians generally with whom the writer is acquainted, there are, probably, very few who if asked the question—Is regeneration an instantaneous change?—would not answer unhesitatingly and undoubtingly, yes. Most of them would be likely to feel surprise that the question should be asked. To them it seems a self-evident truth that it is so, and they may be inclined to feel a trifle impatient at the blindness or stupidity that asks the question. It is believed that some may feel that the idea of instantaneousness is almost vital to the doctrine of regeneration itself. And yet the question must be asked, seriously and earnestly asked.

It is well, perhaps, that we should bear in mind, that in these latter days any dogma or theory, whether of science or religion, needs some better foundation than the fact that it has been widely and long believed. In the waking up of mind that

marks our time, the dust of ages is not sacred. And while old systems of error and kingdoms of wrong are crumbling and tumbling down, many things that are sacred, and many more that have seemed so, may be rudely shaken. But let us not fear. We need not, Uzzah-like, attempt to steady the ark of God. "The foundation of God standeth sure," and "the things that cannot be shaken will remain." The sun of righteousness is rising in the world's sky. And as the light grows clearer it may well be that many things may not look to us as they have done in the twilight. But we will not fear on that account;—especially, we need not, because some merely incidental, and comparatively unimportant belief does not bear the light. It is probably true that the peculiar lisp with which the fathers pronounced the shibboleths of creed may pass away and be forgotten, and neither the church nor the world be any the worse for it. In the fires of honest investigation we may be sure that only the hay, wood and stubble will be burned; the gold and silver will be purified.

But, after all, it would probably surprise many who very confidently believe in instantaneous regeneration, to learn as they would, were they to earnestly study the subject, how few of the standard, or in any way eminent writers on regeneration have contended for its instantaneousness. A very few assert it, a few others seemed to take it for granted, but of those whose works the writer has had access

to, only Dr. Dwight undertakes to argue the question. His argument which includes all that can be said on that side of the question, it is believed, may be briefly, but fairly summed up as follows :

1. Every moral actor must be either sinful or holy, a child of God or a child of the Wicked One, at any or every point of time in his life. There can be no neutral ground between sin and holiness ; and therefore, when one is changed from sin to holiness there must be a specific point of time when the change takes place.

2. The figurative expressions used in the scriptures to indicate regeneration imply instantaneousness.

3. The instances of sudden conversion recorded in the New Testament tend to support the same idea.

Let us now try to examine by the best light we have these supposed arguments ;—and first, what is called

THE NATURE OF THE CASE.

There is, beyond dispute, much seeming force in the idea that there can be no neutral ground between sin and holiness. The word of God does certainly divide the human family into two great classes—the righteous and the wicked. Christ says, “he that is not for me is against me.” He evidently does not want any neutrals, any “peace men,” to meddle in the war which he is waging with sin and wrong.

Thus much must be in candor, and is in all willingness conceded. But does this prove as much as is claimed for it? If so does it not prove too much? If what is no doubt true if taken in a general way of mankind, is strictly true of each individual man, then how can there be any such thing as an intelligent, voluntary seeking for God or coming to Christ? If each and every man is actually leaning with all the force of his will toward sin, and away from God until the instant of his full and complete regeneration, then how can the preaching of the gospel to sinners be any thing else but mockery and shamming. The truth is, instantaneous regeneration is miraculous regeneration, and the idea that God uses means, and works in harmony with the laws of man's being to bring it about, is a delusion. There have been many in past days, there are some now, no doubt, who boldly and unhesitatingly have taken the ground that it was foolish and wrong to preach the gospel to the unregenerate. Were they right? It would certainly appear so, if, under the preaching of the gospel, and the drawings of the Father, and the conviction and persuasion of the spirit, an unregenerate man may not be led to repent and submit to God, and pray for pardon. Is it true that no one can "flee from the wrath to come" and "come to Jesus," and "call upon the name of the Lord," until he is already saved? Must we go back to the hyper-Calvinistic and Antinomian doctrine, and cease to preach that sinners may and should repent,

and cease to make efforts to save men? Consistency and common honesty would seem to require this, if regeneration be miraculous and instantaneous.

But some one will say, Paul said to the Ephesians, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." If they, and other sinners, are dead how can they do anything toward their salvation until they are quickened or made alive? And is not that, regeneration the very beginning of the new life?

In reply we must ask in turn, how were the Ephesians, how are unregenerate sinners dead? Was it, is it in any other way than that their sins had separated them from God? God is the true life of the soul. One separated from him is dead. But it does not follow that such a one is incapable of moral action; nor that he may not under gospel and divine influences turn toward God and prayerfully seek him before he is truly made alive by the indwelling spirit. There is much loose talking and thinking about "moral death." There can hardly be any such thing short of the annihilation of the soul. Moral life is not spiritual life, nor holiness. From all that appears, the deepest dyed, and most unrepentant sinner, on earth or in hell, is morally alive and responsible.

But if we were to admit that sinful men are dead in such a sense as precludes the idea of any action on their part toward God and Christ until they have

been quickened, even then, the idea of an instantaneous quickening is not a necessary one. Their reviving is likely to be more like that of the dry bones in Ezekiel's valley of vision. There was first a prophesying, then a shaking, then bone came to its fellow bone, then flesh covered them, and then at the last by prophesying still, the wind—the spirit came and they lived.

But it may be said, must it not be, necessarily, in the nature of the case true, that the very beginning of the new life, is instantaneous? How can one think of such a change without a transition point?

Well how is it with other beginnings? For instance, day begins—does it begin at any instant? There is every morning a transition from darkness to light, just as there is in the soul that comes to Jesus—but is there a point of transition? If it be said there is a moment when the sun rises, the obvious reply is that even the sunrise is not instantaneous, but there is a very perceptible lapse of time while he is coming above the horizon.

Again, every life of plant or animal begins;—but who can point to the instant of beginning in either? A seed is sown, it is warmed by the sun and watered by the rain, and after a time, there is a visible life unfolded; but if you could have watched it with a microscope during every moment of its germination, you would hardly have discovered an instant of beginning. An animal ovum is :

impregnated and under favoring circumstances there is, by and by, the throbbing of a new heart—a new life has begun, but could you have watched, you should have found the point of beginning as hard to find as in the life of the plant. The truth is, that while beginnings are everywhere around us, instants of beginning exist rather in philosophy, or better perhaps in imagination, than in observable fact.

Closely connected with the idea of instantaneousness in the new birth, is the related thought that that change is somehow the implantation of a sort of divine germ, or life principle in the soul, which really has little or nothing to do with the working of the mind or heart of the one who has received it, so that it may lie dormant for a longer or shorter time, and work no change in the current every day life, and that even after years have passed in which some evidence has been given of a change of character, one may so backslide as to be even more ungodly than before the change, and yet the divine principle remain in him and be a ground of hope of final salvation.

Now it would seem that the mere statement of this idea should be its sufficient refutation. Certainly any one who has carefully studied the New Testament knows that the idea of the new birth is always connected with the idea of a new and holy life. The one who is born of God overcomes the world. They who are led by the Spirit of God are the only ones recognized as the sons of God. “He

who is born of God doth not commit sin for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God." Let no one throw over this the antinomian gloss, that because one is born of God, he may do what he please and it is not sinful. If inclined to do so, let him read Rom. vi: 16, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Always and everywhere the sinner will earn death as his wages; and sinners in Zion have as much reason to fear as others.

But perhaps some one will reply, O, it is not that which is born of God that sins, but the old man, the sinful nature, what Paul calls the flesh. This double nature theory used to be very frequently brought forward as a shelter under which the hope of a consciously sinful and sinning man might hide. Paul was a good man, and Paul was "carnal, sold under sin." He found "a law in his members, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin."

Some years ago, the writer was a little surprised to hear an old man, who was notoriously, in his neighborhood, a very reprobate, say, "I think I shall be saved, I think I am a Christian, because, my experience is so much like Paul's. 'When I would do good evil is present with me.'" His neighbors had no doubt that evil was present with him, but whether he was like Paul was quite another

question. So it may be with many another whose hope is being nursed in the same way.

O, let us not deceive ourselves in this way. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you that for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matt. xii, 35-37. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. vi, 7, 8. It may be that you are deceived in thinking that those passages describe Paul's experience at the time he wrote them. It may be that instead, he is giving the experience of one who is striving to keep the law of God without the help of the Holy Spirit; and that in the next chapter he gives the experience of one who is so born of the Spirit as to be truly a son of God. There is a vast difference between the two.

There is one thing more that is said sometimes, and said as though it were unanswerable. "What will become of those who die while this work of regeneration is going on? They are not exactly impenitent sinners, and they are not, according to

your theory, fully born of God, what will become of them?"

The full and sufficient reply to this is, regeneration is the work of him in whose hand our breath is, and one part of his work is apt to harmonize with another. "He who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." One in whom he is working to will and to do of his good pleasure, is not very likely to slip out of his hand until the work is done.

And yet, one cannot carefully read the scriptures, without facing the fact, that there may be branches of the True Vine that do not bear fruit, and that will be cut off and burned;—plants from seed falling on the rock, that will perish when the sun ariseth;—that there may be some "who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," who after all may so fall away that it is impossible to renew them unto repentance. There is—there can be—no safety short of Christ's being formed within us by the Holy Spirit. Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure.

Passing now, to examine the figurative expressions used in the New Testament to designate the change we are considering, and to inquire if they help to prove its instantaneousness, it is proper to remark that the writer has seen but three of these:

adduced for this purpose. These are The New Birth, The New Creation of the Soul, and Turning to God. Of these the most important because most used and most relied upon is,

THE NEW BIRTH.

In studying this phrase, we observe that the Greek word that is always used in the New Testament where it appears, is some derivation of the verb *gennao*. This is defined by the lexicons as meaning to engender, to procreate, to beget, to produce, more rarely, to bring forth. Now, engendering, begetting, birth, etc., each in its way, indicates the beginning of a life. So being born of God, being born again, being begotten through the gospel, must indicate a new spiritual life,—a new course and habit of life, in one who is its subject. This with the related thought that by this change one enters into a relation to God like that of a son to a father, shows clearly why these terms are used. One cannot doubt that the purpose of their use is to impress it upon us that those who have experienced this change are special objects of God's care and love, and that they will—not ought to, but will—live a new, a godly life, a life radically and thoroughly different from that which they have lived heretofore.

This thought can hardly be too fully impressed upon our minds, can hardly be too often repeated in our thought. The Christian life,—the life resulting

from the New Birth, is no mysterious or miraculous something that may lie somewhere within us, imperceptible, and unaffecting our daily lives; but is such a change in the life currents and motive forces of the soul as will produce a changed life, a godly life, a practically holy life. The holiness of the Christian is neither implied nor imputed, it is wrought in him by the Holy Spirit working in harmony with the will renewed in love.

But does being born of God imply an instantaneous change? Certainly not. Because, if the central idea of the word used by the inspired writers is looked for, it is generation, not birth, nor begetting, and generation is always and necessarily a work of time. Even if we admit that birth is the idea conveyed, it must be said that a birth can never be instantaneous. It may occupy but little time, it may occupy much, it is never the work of an instant.

If the idea of begetting is pressed, it need only be observed that, of the three places where the connection renders this the proper translation of the original, in two Paul speaks of himself as the parent. In 1 Cor. iv, 15, he says, "I have begotten you through the gospel,"—and in Philemon 10th v., he speaks of Onesimus as one "whom," he says, "I have begotten in my bonds." The other passage is 1 Peter i, 3. Here the apostle speaks of the disciples as "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Surely one who finds instantaneousness of change indi-

cated by these scriptures must have a lively imagination.

CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS.

The idea of creation connects itself naturally with the development of the new life of a soul because God is the author of it. No truth is more clearly taught in the Bible than that no one comes into that life of his own motion or by his own power. God in Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. It seems easy to forget, or at least, to lose in a measure, the sense of what we owe to our Heavenly Father. Hence such forms of expression as will help us remember, will fix in our minds the greatness of our debt.

But does the idea of creation involve the idea of an instant of beginning? Perhaps some of us used to think so. Perhaps we have imagined that when God created the heavens and the earth, he caused them to spring at once into existence, complete, finished as we see them now. Is it not safe to say, we know better now! We can see now that the book of Genesis does not assert this. We know too that God has written a much fuller account of creation with his own finger, than he gave to Moses, and laid it where Job desired that his words might be laid—"in the rock forever."

Not all the books of that history have as yet been opened, and we are able to read but imperfectly much that is opened, but enough has been read and that

clearly, to show that the “beginning” is far back in the infinite past, and that the days of creation were periods of such vast duration that each seems almost like an eternity of itself.

O no, there is nothing in the idea of creation to suggest even suddenness.

TURNING TO GOD.

In regard to this it must be said that it is positively surprising that any one, much less an acute theologian, should have thought that turning to God implied an instantaneous change. The phrase does not even suggest sudden or prompt action. When one who is walking in any path turns around and goes the other way, his turning implies thought, resolve and effort. He may turn quickly or slowly, but it is simply impossible that his turning shall be instantaneous. Besides, the turning of a sinner to God is not regeneration—is not God’s work at all—but only an act of the creature that attends, or coincides with God’s work.

INSTANCES OF SUDDEN CONVERSION

recorded in the Scriptures. Dr. Dwight brings forward as supporting the theory we are examining,—The three thousand who were added to the church on the day of Pentecost,—Paul,—The jailor at Philippi,—Dionysius the Areopagite,—Damaris,—and Sergius Paulus.

Now, all these cases might be dismissed with a

single word, because the question is not at all whether regeneration may sometimes be wrought very suddenly, but whether it is always wrought in an instant. Still, with some they have some weight as evidence in the case, and so demand a brief notice.

1. The three thousand who were added to the church on the Day of Pentecost.

Of these we are told in the scriptures just this and no more,—that under the preaching and other influences of that day a great multitude were awakened—convicted—pricked in the heart—and cried out to know what they should do; that Peter preached repentance and baptism to them; that those who gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them—that is, to the company of disciples—about three thousand souls. This appears to have been all done in one day, but there is to be clearly seen the usual process of change, awakening, conviction, inquiry, enlightenment, and acceptance of the gospel, and there is in the case no more proof that conversion—not to say regeneration—is the work of an instant, than there would have been if they had been under apostolic preaching, and under conviction for a year.

2. Paul's conversion.—In regard to Paul's case we are told that when on the way to Damascus on an errand of persecution, he was suddenly stricken down by a divine manifestation; that after conversation with the Lord Jesus, he was so far subdued

as to ask for and obey the Lord's directions ; that he went into the city and remained there three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink,—the natural inference being that he was under such distress of mind as destroyed his appetite ; that he prayed ; and that then Ananias came to him, exhorted and instructed him, laid his hands on him—as was the custom in the church in communicating the Holy Spirit, and he received his sight and was baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost. Now, there was in all this nothing essentially different from other cases of the New Birth, except the miraculous manifestation which awakened him. The change was not even a remarkably sudden one. And, if it be claimed that he was fully changed in the highway under the light and the voice of the Lord Jesus, there is still no proof of an instant of change. There must have been a lapse of time while the conversation was going on, and his mind receiving the new truth.

3. The Philippian Jailor.—Well, his case was very similar to Paul's. He and his family were awakened, and we may say, convicted by a miracle ;—still, we must remember that he could hardly have been ignorant of the previous preaching of the apostles, and that their words in the prison had much to do with his conviction,—that Paul and Silas preached to them farther, and they believed, and were baptized. Now what is there here of an instant of change ? It was not the miracle so much as the preaching of the truth that led them to Christ, and

of course time was necessary while they were hearing and believing.

4. Dionysius and Damaris.—Now, who that reads the Bible does not know that every word that we are told about the conversion of these two is, that at the close of Paul's preaching at Athens, when he "departed from among them, certain men clave unto him and believed, among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." That is all. When Paul went away from Athens he left them believers, and no man can know how long they had been believers, nor any thing about their conversion. It makes one indignant that a true Christian man, and an able theologian, should be so unpardonably careless as to bring forward a proof case like this.

5. That of Sergius Paulos is not much better. He was a Roman Magistrate in the island of Cyprus, who sent for Paul and Barnabas and desired to hear the word of God. Elymas the sorcerer withstood the apostles and sought to turn him from the faith. Elymas was struck with blindness; and the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. This is all we know of the man, and it is not even certain that he was ever truly and savingly regenerated. The phrase, "believed being astonished," suggests the thought that he may have been like some others who are spoken of as believing, who evidently were not deeply and truly changed. Simon Magus was an

instance of this kind, and it would seem that many similar cases occurred during the ministry of Christ and the Apostles.

Let us pass now to examine a few passages of scripture that seem to indicate God's method in working the great change that brings a soul into the new-life. We shall see, it is believed, that the use of time, more or less, is clearly implied, in John vi: 44, Jesus says, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him."

Now the drawing of the Father as a necessary antecedent to a sinner's coming to Christ, implies that in every case God takes the initiative, and according to plan and purpose puts around him, and in his heart, influences that lead him to repentance and a change of life. What the influences are it may be interesting, but is not important, for us to inquire. They probably include the work of God's people, and the reproofing, or convicting of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, by the Holy Spirit. Whatever they are, they are probably seldom, or never thought of by the one under them, as the work of God; he does not know that God is drawing him, only that he is troubled on account of his sins, and inclined to seek salvation and to try to live a better life. And when, at last, he comes, comes freely, voluntarily, and with earnest desire to Jesus, and receives a token of the forgiveness of his sin, he is likely to think that God's work upon his soul was all done at the moment when he obtained his first

view of the Saviour. But that is not true ; at every step God has been the real worker, and the awakening, and conviction, and enlightenment have been equally necessary to the change.

In the fifty-third and fifty-fourth verses of the same chapter, we read, "Then said Jesus unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day." It may be said that this refers rather to the maintenance, than to the inception of the Christian life, but the address of which it is a part was made to unbelievers ; and we must think that the Master meant to have them understand that they could not begin to live spiritually, until they received the gospel, of which he was the embodiment, as the food of their souls, so digesting it, that it should become a part of themselves, a vital and controlling part : and so receive his spirit, his life, his blood, that their lives should harmonize with his life. If they did this, if the truth as it is in Jesus became their food, and they received with desire, as a thirsty man drinks, the Holy Spirit, they would have eternal life. They would be made alive in Christ.

In James i, 18, it is said, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." And in 1 Pet. i, 23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

These texts alone ought to be decisive, and settle finally the question before us. Whatever ideas any one may attach to the acts of begetting and birth, it is expressly asserted that both are brought about instrumentally, by means of the word of God. Now we know very well that the truth acts upon the heart, where the new life has its seat, not by any occult or mysterious power, but as other truth acts, through the intellect. It follows of course that in order to the commencing of this life, the truth must be heard or read—must be thought upon, digested, and through the mind must reach the heart, and working there, being breathed upon and vitalized by the Holy Spirit, must grow into such a power—must exert such force as to turn about permanently the whole life-current of the man.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is by the foolishness of preaching that God will save them who believe. Paul could say to the Corinthians, “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”

Here we rest the question ; thinking it quite possible that the reader is impatient by this time, and is asking, “What is the use of laboring to expose and refute this error if it be one ? Is it not harmless ? What harm can grow out of it, that people believe regeneration to be an instantaneous change ?”

To this it may be replied, that error is always more or less harmful. No man can tell how many influences for evil may be exerted by what seems a

very harmless and innocent error. But it is earnestly believed of this, that,

IT IS NOT HARMLESS.

It is believed that serious evils to the cause of Christ and to souls grow out of it, partially or wholly.

1. *It is an evil*—when false hopes of eternal life are cherished and encouraged ; and erroneous views on this point may do much to foster and build up such hopes.

Certainly it will not be overstating the fact to say that there are a multitude of persons in and around the churches of this time who “have a hope,” and would think it uncharitable if they were not classed among Christians, while yet there is little or nothing in their lives to separate them from the ungodly. Such persons know that they are not Bible Christians, and yet they “cannot give up their hope,” because of certain exercises of mind which they once experienced, which they supposed proved them to be regenerated. They can not unfrequently tell the day and hour—perhaps the moment, of their conversion. For long years they have nursed the memory of the time when the good deacons and the minister thanked God for them that another soul was “saved,” was “born of God,” had become “an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ ;” and when the church sang hymns of joy and triumph over them, and gladly received them

into her membership. Everything indeed had conspired together to make them satisfied that the change in feeling that had come over them was the wonderful change of the new birth, and that all was well.

And now, what though they have for many a year felt little interest in the things of religion, so little that the Bible and prayer have been almost wholly neglected ;—what though the old love of the world and its questionable pleasures have come back as strongly as ever ; what though unholy passions often hold high carnival in their hearts ; is it not true that if one is once born of God he will, somehow, be saved ; and did they not have as good evidence that they became Christians as anybody has ? Their mind always turns back to that time, and in spite of an inward conviction that they are separated very far from God, they find hope that “the miraculous touch of the divine hand” was given them, and their salvation secured. Regeneration means to them, not a radical and thorough change of character and life, but, a mysterious, half-magical something, which is chiefly a device for getting people to heaven. Tell them that the Bible ideal of a regenerate person, is one who is truly and practically consecrated to God, and so, holy in the scriptural sense ; one who does not live in sin daily ; and they will probably tell you,—“Why nobody lives without sin. We don’t believe in perfection. Paul said he was carnal sold under sin, and when he would do

good evil was present with him. David, the man after God's own heart, sinned ; and Peter denied his Lord." And so conscience will be quieted and they will hope on.

Again we say, instantaneous regeneration is miraculous regeneration ; and not only the change itself, but also the evidence of the change, is so far removed from both consciousness and observation that people will hope on and others will hope for them, when neither heart nor life shows any change from a state of nature.

2. *It is an evil*, that a multitude, most of whom are at best but partially developed Christians, are put forward before an unbelieving world as examples of the power of regenerating grace.

The great question which is always open between the church and her opposers, relates chiefly to the power of the gospel to so change sinful men and women, that they will become truly good and holy. A true Christian is the religion of Jesus concrete—embodied. It is in this way that he is "the salt of the earth,—the light of the world,—a living epistle known and read of all men."

If now, the mistake is made of putting forward one in whom the great change is only partially wrought, as a child of God, a great wrong may be done to the world and to the cause of God, as well as to the one himself.

This mistake it is impossible to avoid if instantaneous regeneration is believed in.

3. *It is an evil*, that sanctification has almost ceased to be regarded as an integral and necessary part of the change in regeneration.

Recent writers on either or both regeneration and sanctification, appear to agree in speaking of sanctification as a change necessarily subsequent to regeneration. Bunyan in the, *Holy War*, appears to include them in one work ; and one can hardly read carefully the writings of Doddridge and Edwards without the conviction that one regenerated according to their ideas was truly sanctified.

In these latter years sanctification—or rather questions in regard to it, have been very much in dispute; and the subject has become, in the minds of many, so enveloped in the dust and smoke of controversy that they have lost interest in it almost entirely.

Regeneration is felt to be the important thing. Those who are "born of God" are heirs to the inheritance that is incorruptible and fadeth not away, may be assured of a home in heaven. Why need they perplex themselves with sanctification when it is a subject on which there is so much disagreement?

But if it should appear by and by, that there has been a mistake made, and that one is not sure of heaven, is not recognized by God as his child, unless he is truly sanctified—what then? In the New Testament the term saints is used more than almost any other to designate the regenerate.

Saints means sanctified ones, does it not? In Acts xx: 32, and xxvi: 18, Paul speaks of "all them that are sanctified," meaning thereby all the redeemed. In 1 Pet. i: 2, the people of God are called, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the spirit." This must mean that they are chosen—adopted into God's family by means of sanctification wrought in them by the Holy Spirit. In Heb. xii: 14, it is said, "Follow—holiness," that is, sanctification, the Greek word is the same that in other places is rendered sanctification "without which no man shall see the Lord."

Now the world is full of those who think they are Christians—that they have been born of God,—who yet know that they are in no proper sense sanctified. They are not set apart to Christ as his very own, they are not consecrated—devoted to him and his interests. More, they know that they do not bear his image, either upon their hearts or on their lives. Indeed, they would feel that any one who should call them saints, or speak of them as holy persons in any other than a loose, general way that means nothing, was speaking ironically,—perhaps meant to insult them.

Will it be said now, that the Bible teaches us to regard those who are justified, as in a state of salvation, whether they are sanctified or not? This is taught a great deal. But is it true! Is there not a possible mistake here also? Justification by faith,

without legal righteousness, without the works of the law, is clearly and undeniably taught in the New Testament; but is it not as clearly taught that the faith that secures justification, is a living, soul-controlling faith? Does not such a faith purify the heart and make it practically just and holy? Is not justification as really subjective to the soul, as objective? Let us be careful that what God has joined together, we do not put asunder.

If you and I have become so married to Christ, so become one with him, that he has assumed all our debts, and endowed us with all his riches, then be sure that in that union we are so self-consecrated and spirit-sealed to him, that in our whole being we are consciously his—his for time and eternity without the slightest reserve, and this is sanctification. Is anything short of this assured salvation?

O, it is a thousand pities that the ideas that very many Christian people have of justification and of regeneration have become so dwarfed and emasculated.

4. *It is an evil*—that a multitude of those who have thought themselves converted, and who have really lost their enmity to God and begun to feel something of love to him, are yet living in a state of chronic perplexity in regard to their spiritual state and position.

This class includes, not seldom, those in the churches who are among the most conscientious, steady going, and faithful disciples. Their perplex-

ity arises from the difficulty of reconciling their current experience with their ideas concerning regeneration. They are sure of themselves that they had been changed from what they once were. At the same time they have an abiding conviction that they do not bear satisfactorily the Bible marks of the regenerate. They find in themselves strange fluctuations and contradictions. Sometimes they are sure that they love God—love him most dearly, and that he loves them and smiles upon them. Then the world seems to lose its charms, and they feel much of a spirit of consecration. But such times are not continuous. They try to cling to this frame of mind, but somehow it will not stay. In a little while their hearts grow cold ; their prayers become formal and lifeless ; the old love of the world and relish for its pleasures comes back ; old passions and propensities wake up into fresh life, and often into controlling power ; they neglect duty, and fall under the power of temptation and into sin ; their good resolutions are broken, and their best hopes are blasted.

Where are they ? What are they ? They do not themselves know. Trained, as they have been, in the belief that regeneration is an instantaneous change, and that in the nature of the case they must be on one side or the other of that mysterious line that is supposed to be drawn between the saved and the lost ; that the change which they have experienced, which they call conversion, must be either

the new birth in its fulness or else nothing,—nothing but excited sensibility and self-deception ; it is no wonder that they are perplexed.

How shall the perplexity be removed, the doubts be solved ? Shall it be by telling them that all Christians live in this same half-and-half, up and down, sinning and repenting way ; that even Paul was carnal, sold under sin, and when he would do good evil was present with him ; that the best of Christians find a law in their members warring against the law of their mind and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin in their members ? If we do this we may have helped them to doubt if there be, after all, really anything in regeneration more than the effect of excited imagination ; something too to hinder them from seeking a fuller, deeper knowledge of Jesus ; but nothing, absolutely nothing to assure them that they are born of God.

Shall we prescribe work as the panacea for their ills, and tell them they must be faithful and press on, etc. ? We shall still have done nothing to give them rest in Jesus and the assurance of faith ; but only thrown them back again upon self,—the broken reed that has pierced them so often. Work may be a palliative,—is often a relief to an aching heart—and one who thinks he is working for Jesus is likely to feel a comfortable self-complacency that is often mistaken for religious enjoyment, but if God is leading him, he will soon be shaken loose from work as

a ground of confidence, and will find that it is no cure for such ills as his.

But suppose now, that these disciples could be taught to look upon the change they have experienced—whether it were less or more, if it brought them nearer to God in love and obedience—as the work of God by his word and spirit, and an earnest of his love to them, and evidence of his desire and purpose to draw them fully to himself and make them know the fulness of his salvation ; that it was not probably, regeneration in its completeness, but a part of that change and a pledge of his willingness to do for them and in them, more than they could ask or think. Suppose too, that they could be made to see that it is God's way of giving spiritual blessings to first awaken a sense of want and a desire for them, and then give them in answer to the prayer of faith ; that in their case he has already enabled them to believe in Christ as a sin-forgiving Saviour, and is now teaching them their need of him as a heart-keeping, sin-conquering Saviour, and is ready to reveal him in them as such, if they wholly desire him, and are willing that he shall come in as Master and Lord forever.

Would not the case take another aspect then ? Might we not hope, that instead of looking at self all the time and depending really, if not in theory, upon self, they would be led to look to Jesus as the finisher as well as the author of their faith, and forgetting the things and questions that are behind,

press onward, to know the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the perfect love of Christ, and be filled with all the fulness of God; working out their salvation with fear and trembling, assured that God is working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure?

When this is done and Christ is formed in them the hope of glory, then and not till then, will their regeneration be complete and assured. Then the spirit will bear witness with their spirits that they are children of God.

“ O love of God, how strong and true!
Eternal and yet ever new.
Uncomprehended and unbought,
Beyond all knowledge and all thought.

“ We read thee best in him who came
To bear for us the cross of shame;
Sent by the Father from on high,
Our life to live, our death to die.

“ We read thy power to bless and save,
Even in the darkness of the grave;
Still more in resurrection light
We read the fulness of thy might.

“ O love of God, our shield and stay,
Through all the perils of our way:
Eternal Love, in thee we rest,
Forever safe, forever blest!”

VI.

REPENTANCE.

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of.”

REPENTANCE and regeneration are very closely related. We can hardly conceive of one as occurring without the other. If one be regenerated he must have truly repented, and if he have repented it can be considered certain that regeneration was a coincident fact.

Calvin, in his “Institutes,” treats of regeneration only under the head of repentance. Indeed, he says,—“In one word I apprehend repentance to be regeneration.” And it is remarkable how little he says on the subject in any way. Was this because he had not yet wholly freed himself from the idea of baptismal regeneration? It is hard to say, but it may be so. Few of the leading reformers of his time succeeded in doing it; and among his followers the idea of some sort of “divine efficacy” connected with baptism has been very persistent. Still we must look upon it as a somewhat singular mistake, because repentance is plainly the work of man while regeneration is the work of God. Repentance is

commanded and is the duty of every sinful one, while the new-birth is promised and given by God, to those who repent.

And yet it will hardly do to say that repentance must precede regeneration. They belong together, and we mistake if we attempt to put one before the other. This mistake is common ; it grows naturally out of the idea of instantaneous regeneration. Dr. Boyd, in “None but Christ,” says, “Instead of repentance being a state of mind that prepares the sinner for coming to Christ, it is a state of mind which can only be produced by his coming to Christ. Instead of repentance leading us to Christ, it is Christ that leads us to repentance. It does not go before but follows after acceptance through Jesus. The moment a man believes savingly in Jesus he repents, and he never does before.”

Repentance, as well as regeneration, is an instantaneous thing then ; and repentance is “a state of mind.” Is this true ? Beyond doubt it is quite commonly received as true among Christian people. The writer asked a Christian pastor of intelligence and standing to define evangelical repentance. He replied, “It is godly sorrow for sin.” Probably a majority of ministers and intelligent Christians would have answered in a similar way ; and they would have had the dictionary to support them. But would it have been correct ? Is that the New Testament idea ? The writer believes not, and begs the reader’s patient thought upon that question for a little.

God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Does that mean that he requires them to be sorry? Would it be a reasonable requirement if he did? "He will not lay upon man more than right that he should enter into judgment with God." Would a command to be sorry be so plainly reasonable and right that it would appeal to the conscience of a sinful man? To illustrate,—suppose you try such a command upon your boy. He has been doing wrong, is keeping bad company and getting into bad ways generally. You call him to your side and say to him, "John, I hear much of your bad ways; I am sure that you are living a bad life; that you are doing wrong habitually. Now I command you to be sorry for your course of life; under penalty of my extreme displeasure, and your severe punishment I require you to be sorry for your wrong-doing." How would such a command affect John's conscience? What would he think about it? Possibly he might play hypocrite and pretend to be sorry. If too honest for that, he would say in his heart, "I wonder if my father thinks I can be sorry just when I please. I can't and I won't pretend to what I don't feel. I won't tell him that I am sorry." And then if you punish him, not for the wrong that he has done but simply because he is not sorry, he will feel his whole soul rise up in indignant protest against your injustice.

By taking such a course as this, any sensible father would expect to confuse all his boy's ideas of

right and wrong, and to harden his heart. In order that any one, boy or man may feel the moral force of a command, it must harmonize with his sense of right. The day has gone by for people to feel that kingship or power makes right.

Perhaps a word may not be amiss, just here, in regard to the Law of God. It is spoken of sometimes as a transcript of the divine character and so of necessity, so high and holy in its requirements that the fallen children of men can have no hope of keeping it. It appears to be thought that Adam might have kept it ; but that it is nothing short of heresy to suppose that his children can.

Now this kind of talk may be all very well meant. It may be thought that it glorifies God ; but it is hard to see how it comes much short of slandering him. Doubtless God's word is intended to reveal him to his creatures ; but his law, if it be holy, just and good, must be adapted to the ability and circumstances of those who are put under it. If it is not, it cannot be a just law, and to maintain an unjust law dishonors any ruler, would dishonor God. Doubtless the glory of God is very dear to the heart of every true Christian ; but a little sprinkling of common-sense among one's religious ideas would enable him to see that no being can be glorified except by showing him worthy of glory. It would not glorify you or me to have our friends tell loudly in every public place where they could find hearers that we were holy, were perfect. The

people would say of us, "Let us know what their life is—what their acts are, and we will judge of their perfection. In their hearts they say the same thing of God. There is in every human heart a tribunal—God-established—before which the right and wrong of all acts, of all things, indeed which have moral character, must be tried when they come to his knowledge. Of course erring men may make mistakes, sinful men may judge wrongly, wickedly even, but they are constituted by their Creator judges nevertheless, and if we would glorify God before them we must show him as he is, just and good as well as holy.

But Jesus settled this question as to whether the law was above human ability when he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

There need be no mistake here. The command is, thou shalt love according to thy ability,—thy powers of loving. Not according to what God deems perfect love; nor according to an angel's powers of loving, nor according to what Adam's powers might have been; but simply according to thy heart, and soul, and mind.

But it may be said that no man ever did, or of his own motion ever will, keep even this law of

love. And so far as appears this is true. Perverted affections and a rebellious will rise up against God and his law, and so the law, just and good as it is, has failed as a means of controlling men and bringing them to holiness and heaven. Requiring nothing but what is reasonable and right, nothing but what men can and ought to do, it yet requires much which unregenerate men have not heart or will to do ; and just on this account the gospel was devised as a system of means to change men's hearts and harmonize their will to the will of God.

Now, repentance belongs to this scheme of the gospel, not to the law. When God commands repentance he does not require service. Whether to repent is to be sorry, or something else, it certainly is not of the nature of service to God, or any of his creatures. Nor is it properly a grace of character, or a fruit of the spirit's presence. At least it is not mentioned among the fruits of the spirit. It is true that it is spoken of in several places in the scriptures as the gift of God, but it is believed that in most if not all of these the term is used by metonymy for the gospel. Thus in Acts xi, 18, it is said that when the Apostles and brethren had heard Peter's account of the conversion of Cornelius, they said, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." They meant that God had extended the preaching and privileges of the gospel and salvation by Christ to the Gentiles. In Acts, v, 31, it is said, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a

Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins.” Here, also, repentance and the forgiveness of sins stand for the gospel way of salvation. In 2 Tim., ii, 24, 25, the servant of the Lord is exhorted to be patient, “in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” This, more than any other passage in the New Testament, seems to convey the idea that repentance is the gift of God, rather than the act of the creature. And beyond dispute there is a sense in which repentance or any other act that is in harmony with God’s will is his gift. But in this passage the connection requires us to conceive of repentance not as being sorry, but as a change of mind.

To recur now to our illustration.—Suppose you say to your wrong-doing boy,—“My son, your course of life and so far as appears your plan and purpose of life is all wrong, wholly wrong and wicked; now I require of you that you stop and think soberly and earnestly of your ways, and that you change your course, turning away from your sins wholly, and live henceforth a new, a good life.” This command your son may not obey, but it will appeal directly to his conscience and sense of right. He will feel the reasonableness of it, and his obligation to obey; and if you punish him for disobedience, he will feel in his inmost soul that the punishment was deserved.

Now, almost precisely such a command as this God gives to his erring, sinful children when he says to them, *metanoesati*—repent—change your mind—and so your life. He does not say to them “be sorry,” nor “do penance,” but “stop and think—take the sober second thought, and do differently.” The reasonableness of this command the most inveterate sinner will not deny. He can understand it ; his conscience will endorse it ; and if he do not obey it, he will feel that the fault is his own.

Metanoeo and Metameleomai.

In the common English version of the New Testament we find the words repent, repentance, etc., used a little more than sixty times. In fifty-six of these instances, and it is believed in every one where repentance is commanded or urged as a duty, or spoken of as connected with salvation, the Greek word which is thus translated is some form of *metanoeo*. On the other hand when the idea is that something is regretted simply, the original word is *metameleomai*.

A single passage in Paul’s second Epistle to the Corinthians will set the meaning of these two words in a clear light. See 2 Cor. vii. 8–10, “For though I made you sorry with a letter I do not repent though I did repent ; for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were

made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Now the meaning of this passage is not doubtful in the English, but it is much clearer in the Greek. In the eighth verse we know that Paul meant, "though I made you sorry I do not regret it though I did regret it." He expressed the regret by using *metameleomai*. In the ninth verse he said, "Now I rejoice not that ye were made sorry but that ye sorrowed to repentance," and we cannot for a moment suppose that he was glad that they had sorrowed to regret; we see at once that what he was glad of was that their sorrow had brought them to a change of mind and of action. This he expressed by writing *metanoian*. In the tenth verse he lays down the general principle that godly sorrow brings about in those who are exercised by it, a saving change of mind and life which will never be regretted. In doing it he uses *lupe* to express sorrow, *metanoian* for repentance or the saving change, and *ametameleton* for regretted.

Now is it not greatly to be regretted that repent was used to translate both these words? This more than anything else, probably, has led to the confused ideas that seem so general in the church in regard to repentance. It is no wonder that with many, regret has usurped a place in their

creed that does not belong to it ; but it is rather a wonder that when Paul wrote that godly sorrow worketh repentance, he should be understood to say that it is repentance.

This seems sufficient to show what evangelical—saving repentance really is ; that it is something very much more than sorrow, whether godly or otherwise, and of necessity includes the idea of a change of mind and life. Keeping this in mind we cannot fail to see the great importance of

THE PRACTICAL BEARINGS OF THE QUESTION.

Every Christian minister—every Christian who has vitality enough to be known as a Christian, is liable to be called upon at any time to answer the question of an awakened sinner, “ What must I do to be saved ? ” It is important that he shall be able to do it as wisely as may be. Upon the answer may hang the destiny of a soul. A mistake may be fatal. The “ truth as it is in Jesus,” may save a soul from death.

By the way, it is a marvelous thing that in revival meetings so many who are very undeveloped Christians in both knowledge and experience—“ who have need that one should teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God,” are willing to take upon them the guidance of inquirers. It is small wonder when the blind lead the blind, if both fall into the ditch.

But suppose now that one who is truly awak-

ened, and feels himself a lost sinner comes to us with the great question, how shall we answer him? Probably we shall say in the words of scripture, "repent and believe the gospel." If we do, he will, it may be, ask again, "But what is it to repent?" We say to him, "You must exercise a godly sorrow for sin; you must be sorry for your sin, not because you are in danger of punishment, but because it is against God that you have sinned." Have we aided him? Have we thrown any light upon his path? Nay verily! Beyond much doubt he has already in his mind a half formed idea that if he can only feel as badly as he ought to, as sorry, God will be propitiated and forgive him. We have helped to strengthen that idea. We may afterwards talk to him of Christ and his atonement, but our first words have barred the way to Christ by turning his thoughts toward the atonement of pain—of sorrow of heart. We have not told him to "do penance." We do not believe in penance. We are inclined to smile sadly at the folly of the Romish devotee that we read of, who, standing upon his knees on pounded glass before a picture of the Virgin Mary, thinks to expiate his sin by the pain he endures. But how far have we been from telling our poor friend to do penance in his heart, that if he can only feel enough and the right kind of sorrow, God will accept him and all will be well?

We must not forget that there is in every unregenerate human heart, a disposition to depend upon

something that self is to do, or that Christian friends may do for him to secure God's favor. Justification by faith alone,—just looking to Jesus—is no easy thing for a sinner to learn. He will run to almost any refuge, he will cling to almost any hope rather than let go of everything, and fall helpless and condemned into the arms of the Saviour.

There is another thing to be remembered. Under this kind of teaching many truly awakened persons will be discouraged and hindered because their hearts are so hard and unfeeling. They will think that if they could only feel as they hear others tell of feeling they would have some hope ; God might then have mercy upon them ; but they cannot, their heart is hard as a rock.

Another class may think they have felt just as badly as they can, worse than others who have found mercy, and yet no relief has come. Tell them to be sorry, and you seem like one mocking at their distress, and very likely God may seem partial and unjust to them.

Now suppose we say to all these inquirers whatever their special trouble may be, God's word to you is repent : and he means, not primarily nor chiefly that you should be sorry, but that you should turn away from your sins and come to Jesus. He does not care to see you suffer. He will not be propitiated by your sorrow or pain ; but he does care to have you turn to him and strive to do his will instead of your own. He who comes to Jesus in the

spirit of submission, taking him as Master, and putting his hand in his to be led henceforth in all his life by his will and word, has truly repented whether his sorrow for sin has been less or more. If we do this, whether they turn or not, we shall, instead of mystifying them more and more, have done something to give them light, and show them that God's requirements are in harmony with their sense of right. The gospel word to them is, come to Jesus, come now, come just as you are without waiting a moment for feeling of any kind, and whosoever will may come, and he that cometh shall in no wise be cast out.

But can an unregenerate sinner change his own mind and course of life? Can he repent in this sense? As a legal duty perhaps not,—as a gospel privilege he certainly can if he will. The case is this:—wherever the word of the gospel comes to any human being, if he find it in his heart to listen and obey, there is present with him the Holy Spirit, whose especial office and mission it is to work in him “both to will and to do” all the will of God. It is not a question of what he can do alone. Help is laid upon one who is mighty, and is waiting for him all the time. This changes it entirely from a question of ability to one of will. The fact that he is awakened and inquiring shows that the drawings of the Father are about him; and it should be impressed upon his mind that he is required to decide now whom he will serve. He knows that he possesses,

the natural ability to choose his course of life, and if he has a sense of his weakness of will and is afraid of falling under the power of the temptations and allurements of a sinful world, so much the better if he will only believe in the divine helper who is ever near. An arm of infinite power is always reached out toward one who will allow his hand to be taken, and it will lift him out of the quicksands and mire of folly and sin and place his feet high and firm and safe upon the Rock of Ages. The only question is, will he be helped? God does not propose to save him against his will. He made him a man—not a machine—and gave him the power to choose his own course of life, and he proposes to treat him as a man. So he comes to him as a friend and warns him of danger; he comes as his rightful ruler and commands him to turn from his evil ways; he even comes as a loving father to a son, and adds entreaty to command, beseeching him to turn that he may live. But he does not propose to force one sinner to be saved against his will. “Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life,” is the sad lament of the loving Christ over lost men. “O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but ye would not.”

Another of the practical bearings of this question is seen in the experience of many Christian people.

There are very many who believe themselves God’s children who are church members, and some

of them, more or less earnest workers in religious matters, who talk about repenting daily. They say that their life is made up of sinning and repenting. They are understood to mean that after they have yielded to temptation and fallen into sin, they are sorry for it. Repentance evidently means to them being sorry for sin, and they may think their sorrow to be godly sorrow, but somehow it does not work much change in their course of life. It may lead to many good resolutions in regard to what they are going to do in the future ; but their life runs on day after day in about the old track, and their good resolutions are too much like the goodness of Ephraim “as the morning cloud and the early dew.”

Probably you and I, dear reader, have been, possibly we are now, just in this habit of life. And worse, it may be that we are contented to remain there, encouraged in so doing by the way in which repentance has been taught and talked about in our religious circles.

But is it a good way,—is it the right way for a child of God to live ? Do we not know, if we are in it, that we are self-indulgent in regard to things which God cannot approve ; that we are selfish and sinful, and notwithstanding our good resolutions have no earnest controlling purpose to be otherwise ? Do we not know that our course of life is mainly away from God and toward worldliness ;—and that when now and then we turn our faces toward him we turn them as it were over our shoulder, while our feet keep on in the old path ?

O, how sad it is that there is so much of this easy-going, slip-shod religion in the church !

If our religious teaching has encouraged us in the thought that we may live in this way and yet be in the way to heaven, there must be sad mistakes somewhere. If repentance means to us something that wins God's favor, and yet does not produce a godly, a practically holy life, our mistake is there.

There is, no doubt, a sense in which Christians may repent, and ought to, every day. As the sacrifice of ourselves upon the altar of God is to be a living sacrifice, that is, the spirit of sacrifice, of giving up all to God is to be continued from moment to moment perpetually, so in true repentance there may be said to be a continual turning away from sin and wrong to God and holiness. But this is a very different thing from the vain and impotent regret that we have been considering. So long as temptation and sin are around us there must be a constant exercise of the power of choice in regard to the course we take. This choice of God's way and will, this turning to him may become so much the habit of the soul as hardly to seem a voluntary act, but it is, nevertheless. God may have so taken possession of our whole being that we seem to have no power to choose against his will, and yet the will-power must be awake and keeping the citadel of the heart, the arms of faith must be reaching out to him, clinging to him all the time. Yes,

true repentance must, and will be perpetual repentance.

This shows us how foolish it is to perplex one's-self over the question, "Have I truly repented?" Many are doing it; possibly the reader is one of them. He keeps turning his thoughts back, it may be to the time when he first found hope, and is anxious oft to know if the sorrow he felt was indeed the godly sorrow of repentance. Godly sorrow is so hard to define. Did he feel enough and of the right kind of sorrow? Let him be assured that it does not matter in the least what his sorrow was, if he truly turned from the paths of sin to follow Jesus, that was repentance unto life.

But neither does it matter very much to-day, about his truly turning in that former time. The important question is, does he now, to-day, turn with all his heart, away from selfishness and sin, to God, choosing his will and seeking to be led by his word and spirit? It is better for us to "let the dead past bury its dead." We cannot call back and change, or cancel one act, no, not one thought of all our lives. They have gone to God,—are recorded upon his book, and we cannot blot out the record. Tears of penitence will not do it, though we wept for a thousand years. But the blood of Jesus may; and he says "come to me, come, and let us talk over the matter,—let us reason together, and though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

Let us take him at his word and go now, go just as we are ; if we have been before we shall know the way and it will be easy ; but in either case, the way is the same ; let us put the whole matter in his hands, just giving ourselves to him as his very own, for better for worse, for time and eternity.

Then we shall, probably, forget to think much about our repentance, or care whether it were good or bad. The soul that has found rest in Jesus knows that its acceptance was not on account of any thing right or good that there was about it ; but coming like the prodigal son all sinful and unworthy, it found itself met on the way and enfolded in the arms of infinite love.

“ I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest ;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.

“ I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad ;
I found in him a resting place,
And he has made me glad.

“ I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold I freely give
The living water ; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live.

“ I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream ;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him.

“I heard the voice of Jesus say.
I am this dark world's light ;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright.

“I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my Star, my Sun ;
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till traveling days are done.”

Bonar.

VII.

THE NEW LIFE.

“ I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” *Gal. ii, 20.*

LET us try now to form before our mind's eye, a picture of a Bible Christian ;—a full length portrait of one who is God's child by spiritual generation. This is important to our present discussion, because the New Birth can be studied objectively, only in the resulting life. The coming of the Holy Spirit to the soul is wholly imperceptible, even to the soul itself. “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth ; so is every one who is born of the spirit.” But, as in nature, the peculiar type of life in plant or animal shows itself unmistakably by external indications, so the new life of the soul will certainly result in new manifestations of character. “ By their fruits ye shall know them.”

Our inquiry then, is for the traits or marks of character which the Bible describes as peculiar to those who are born of God. We are not interested just now in inquiring how far these traits are ex-

hibited in the current religious life around us. Indeed, if it were possible, it would seem desirable for us to be unbiased by any comparison of ourselves or others, with the Bible ideal of a Christian. We may be tempted sometimes to lower the standard of excellence in order that we or our works may appear to better advantage.

The traits we seek may be either external and so appreciable to others, or internal and appreciable only by one's-self ; or they may be both external and internal at the same time. Of course when we think of the new life as proving itself to others, we feel most the importance of the external marks ; but it is of importance to every one of us to know himself, and be sure of his standing before God ; and we may properly discuss here things which, in each individual experience, are secrets between the soul and its God.

In Gal. v. 22, 23, it is said, " But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." We can hardly do better than to follow this list.

LOVE

stands first ; and of right it is first, because although " God is love," " the carnal mind is enmity against God," therefore true love to God must show that the heart is changed. And " love is the fulfilling of the law ;" and that, not because it is accepted instead of obedience, but because it properly includes

and implies all obedience, all service, and all worship.

But what is love? Good-willing—benevolence,—this and more—but this first, for true love is best distinguished from that which is false, by its unselfish delight in the well being and happiness of the beloved one. Impure, unholy love is but another name for desire, and is selfish and debasing. It seeks self-gratification; while true love—even human and earthly love delights in self-sacrifice if thereby the beloved one is benefited or made happy.

But is God an object of benevolence to us? Can he be benefited or made happy by any thing that we can do? Well, let us see. We can benefit a man—our neighbor, if he has interests around us, by promoting those interests, if we have no means of acting directly upon him. God has interests around us which we can promote, therefore he is not beyond the reach of our benevolence. Again we can benefit a man and make him happy by doing good to those he loves. If you have labored to make my child, my wife, my dear friend happy, I cannot but feel your acts as done to me. God has dear friends, dear children all about us, and has told us plainly that a cup of cold water given to one of them because they belong to him, shall in no case be forgotten, and any kindness done to the least one of them all is felt by him as done to himself. Be sure there is no lack of opportunity to benefit God. The need is of loving hearts to prompt willing hands.

Nor is there lack of power; for “if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

We may conclude then, that those who are born of God will be practically lovers of his children, laborers for their welfare, and earnest care-takers and workers for his interests. The cause of Christ everywhere will be dear to them, and they will labor because they love. There will be no need to goad them on to duty by threats of punishment, nor to stimulate them by telling them that if they are faithful and work they will be happy. Still less will there be need to arouse a spirit of emulation, and the desire for honor among men. They will give and work for God, just because they love him, and will need no other motive.

Again, love is emotional attraction. There is something that always draws us towards the beloved one; and if we love God we shall desire, and strive to come near to him. Communion with him will be our joy; absence from him a real grief. His name will be pleasant to our ears, and we shall love the house of his worship—the place where he meets his people—and we shall love, too, the closet where, with all the world shut out, we can talk with him as a man talketh with a bosom friend. This is probably the form of love most thought of, most sought for, in the church generally; and yet it is not the best, or highest form. It is in fact the lowest, the

one most easily counterfeited, and, it would seem, may exist in a degree, in a heart where selfishness and sin are yet living powers.

Pure love is hardly passional, is certainly not selfish, and is more a state of the soul than an emotion or an act. God is love, we must suppose, not because he exercises emotions of love, nor because he does loving acts,—although, no doubt both emotions and acts of love are constant with him, but because he exists in such a state of mind and heart as to be incapable of anything contrary to love. Where it is said that he is angry and hates, we must understand, only, that he is moved by such revulsion of feeling, and such purpose to oppose, as any holy, loving being must feel at the sight of sin and wrong, and has also such determination to punish wrong as is necessary to his being a just ruler. Such anger and hate is only a form of love.

In regeneration, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, who becomes the abiding guest and keeper of the soul.—Yes, guest and keeper,—he is both ; and where he is there will be the highest form of human love, viz. assimilation, harmony, oneness of feeling, with God. To one in this state, God will, of course, be the first, the supreme object of love. Being infinitely more worthy of love than any other being or thing, and being in perfect union and harmony with the one loving, it is but natural that he should be loved with all the heart and mind and strength. We must not how-

ever make the mistake of supposing that one fully born of God, and assimilated to him in love, will be at all times, excited by as powerful emotions of love as he is capable of. God never meant us to be perpetually excited by any emotion. He did not make us capable of enduring long at a time, such tension of nerves as sometimes comes from love to himself. There is such a thing as resting in love ; when the soul, calm, quiet, hardly conscious of emotion, is busy, it may be, with worldly things, and yet knows every moment, that the deep under-current of its life is flowing to God, and with God.

Such love cannot be hid. The child of God will be a fountain of loving thoughts, and words, and deeds ; and these will flow out not only towards God, but to all around him. Mind—will flow—not ought to. The Holy Spirit does not come to a man's heart to teach it that it ought to love, but to make it love. And, if one professes to love God, and does not love all being around him according to its recognized claims ; if his love does not make his family, his friends, his servants, yes, even his horse and his dog happier and more trustful towards him it is not worth speaking of. However well such a one may talk, he is like the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal. He may have wondrous frames and ecstasies even, and yet be no more born of God than is the howling dervish in his ecstasy. “ Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God and every one that loveth is born of God

and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love."

JOY.

We are told sometimes that a Christian should not seek to be happy in this life ; he should be willing to work here, and wait for happiness till he is called home to the rest and joys of heaven. The idea looks plausible—but it would seem that David thought, and under the guidance of the Spirit, too, that he could serve God, work for him, better, if he could rejoice in God. He says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit ; then will I teach transgressors thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Was David wrong ? Nehemiah told the people of God in his day that the joy of the Lord was their strength. Was he mistaken ? Jesus said to the disciples, John xv : 11, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Did not he know the need of his followers ? He did know, and has clearly taught, that spiritual joy is necessary to every Christian.

Joy in the Lord keeps the Christian pilgrim in the strait and narrow path ; he does not need when he is happy in God to seek pleasure in sinful, nor even in doubtful ways. Young people who enjoy God do not care for the pleasures of the dance, and the gay party where extravagant dress, and un-

sanctified eating and drinking, and late hours, and unholy excitement, dissipate the mind and exhaust the body. Older ones too, are kept from the power of worldliness, or from any of their peculiar temptations by the same means. But any one, old or young, who is not happy as God would have him be, will seek to be happy in some other way, and when sinful baits allure, will be very likely to follow sinful paths.

There is another reason why joy should be a trait of the Christian. A happy follower of Jesus is a walking recommendation of his Master; a gloomy one is like the spies who brought up an evil report of the good land. This is why young converts so often appear to have more power over the impenitent than others; they are full of joy, and when they talk of Jesus, the sinner knows that they feel in their hearts something to which he is a stranger. The minister, the deacon, the talking members, talk and pray from principle and most people are sure to be glad when they stop; but one of the weak ones of Zion tells in unaffected phrase of precious joy in communing with Jesus; don't "talk at any body" nor exactly try to do any body any good, but just spills over a little of the joy the full heart is carrying, and lo! every drop is caught by somebody. Such drops fall on dry hard hearts, like the summer rain in drought. You and I have been to many a prayer-meeting where good and wise men, and women, spoke and prayed, and sung, because

they thought they ought to, and have gone away calling it “a good meeting,” yet down in our secret hearts were glad when it was over. The element of joy in the Lord was not there, and so far as ever appeared, a Quaker meeting, spent in dead silence, would have been as profitable. Thank God!—the Holy Spirit is given to be our comforter; and if we are fully born of God he has a home in our hearts, and we may “be filled with the Spirit,” and “rejoice evermore.”

PEACE.

“There is no peace saith the Lord unto the wicked.” No peace! none with God, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and God is angry with the sinner every day; none in the heart, because the conscience, the reason and judgment are on the side of God, and according to their strength are opposing the rule of sin; none with the world, because even boon companions in sin are natural enemies, selfishness reigns everywhere, and the world’s maxim is, “Take care of number one.”

But there is peace in Jesus. He gave us as a legacy, gave us as a last best special gift, fulness of peace—his peace. He said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Blessed words! we will grasp them and hold them as our own, in all their full, deep meaning.

But peace does not usually come with the beginnings of the work of regeneration. This is as we might expect. The soul is in rebellion, and is to be conquered for Immanuel. Of course, peace can only come when the conflict is over and the victory won. The awakened—convicted soul, seems often in a very tempest of fight. With the first hope of pardon, and the first gush of love to Jesus, there comes usually a lull in the battle, and many times it seems over; but usually before long the power of unruly propensities is felt again; the “law in the members” is not dead and often its power is so put forth that the soul is brought into captivity to sin, and feels itself “carnal, sold under sin.” This conflict may soon end in victory for Jesus, or it may under wrong teaching that cripples the power of faith, last almost the life-time. Many, indeed, contend stoutly that it must last till death. But Jesus did not say, I will give you peace in heaven, but, I leave it with you, I give it to you now, to meet a present want. The child of God may bear this fruit of the Spirit now.

When the divine Comforter comes to abide in the soul peace comes. When he comes to visit the soul that is not yet ready and willing to open itself fully to him, he brings foretastes of peace that are very sweet, but they do not last; the conflict and often the bondage begins again. But when sought with the whole heart he comes to reveal Christ in the soul as Master and Keeper, then a peace is con-

quered ; and the proclamation of it is the sweetest music the soul ever heard. Then peace is like a river, full, deep, resistless in its heavenward flow.

This fruit of the Spirit is especially intended for the refreshment of the soul where it grows ; but at the same time it is more or less visible to others, and is always an ornament to him who bears it, and a glory to him who gives it.

LONG-SUFFERING.

The world says, “When you are struck, strike back, and give interest if you can.”—Jesus says, “If a man strike thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also.” If you strive to obey Jesus and repay no wrongs, men call you “white-livered, tame-spirited, a milk-sop.” The world and your nature are agreed and speak loudly to you ;—the voice of Jesus is very soft. The probabilities—especially if you have “a good temper of your own,”—are largely against your obeying Jesus.

But if the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you, and fills you with love not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward, gives you such love as Jesus felt for his murderers when he prayed, saying, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do ;” such as Stephen felt when in dying agony he cried, “Lay not this sin to their charge ;” then you may be long-suffering in spite of nature and the world. We must remember though, that few of us are called to be martyrs. Our long-suffering will

be quite as likely to be tried by the little annoying things, against which we cannot arouse any heroism or imagine ourselves showing the martyr-spirit. The unreasonableness or fretfulness of a companion or a child, coming, as it often does, at a time when we are nervous and irritable from disease or weariness, will, very likely, sorely try our Christian graces, and this of long-suffering quite as much as any. And we may remember too, that by bearing such trials aright ; by meeting the thousand and one little vexations of every-day life with equanimity and Christian long-suffering, we are giving a proof of our regeneration, of our being led by the Spirit, as effective, and convincing to those around us as any we could give.

GENTLENESS.

It is possible that to some it may seem almost strange that gentleness should be put among the fruits of the Spirit. Truth, and plain, faithful dealing, one with another, such as the gospel requires, are thought to require, or at least to excuse bluntness, and even harshness of manner. All of us have met people who evidently valued themselves more highly because they were disagreeable. The dislike which they incurred was persecution, and a proof of their godly faithfulness. "Ah, these times are sadly degenerate ! People will not endure sound doctrine and reproof any more." But dear friends permit the suggestion that possibly it was not so much the

truth that offended, as the manner in which it was clothed. It may be there was a “tang” of ill-nature in your words—that you really felt a little cross, and for the moment had as lief your words would sting as not. It has been the experience of many, that if they could be sure that there was nothing in their own hearts contrary to love, and if their manner was gentle and kind, they could be very faithful in exhortation and reproofs, without giving offence.

In the world, gentleness, suavity of manner, politeness, often cover a deceitful heart. But this should not lead us to forget that when they are worn honestly, they are a true grace of character. Worldly politeness may be a counterfeit brilliant, only paste; Christian gentleness is the real gem. Growing over the character from a loving heart, it is almost like a robe of nacre, so soft and pearl-like is its beauty.

It is too, a blessed indication of the presence in the heart of the divine comforter. Many a time have we seen those who had earned a reputation for harshness and unkind judgments, become most careful of the feelings of others, most kind and loving in their manner, and even the tones of their voice are softened and made sweet, when the Holy Spirit has breathed himself in upon their heart-life.

Nor will such gentleness weaken the testimony which may be borne for the truth and against sin. Strong, and even stern rebukes may be given to sin

and wrong by one whose heart is so full of love that it would gladly suffer itself, to save the sinning one. Jesus was no weakling in his words ; albeit the world has seen no one so gentle as he.

GOODNESS.

This is eminently a practical trait of character, and does not need many words to show its excellence or urge its importance. To be good, is to be like God ; and like him to shed blessings all around one. Jesus our example, went about doing good everywhere. If we receive his spirit, if we are so born of God as to become his true brothers, we shall partake of his nature and do as he did, according to the ability and opportunity given to us.

FAITH.

Faith is commanded to all men. It is a reasonable duty which every man owes to God. To fail of believing in Jesus is to fail of salvation. And yet, faith is a fruit of the Spirit,—a sign of his presence, a proof that he who acts it, is born of God. It appears, indeed, that an unregenerate sinner cannot even understand clearly what faith is. The inference may naturally be drawn from this that God commands what the sinner cannot do, and so is an unjust ruler. But it must be remembered that God offers to every sinner where the gospel comes, just the help which he needs to enable him to believe and be saved. It does not make God unjust to re-

quire that which is impossible to us, if he is at the same time giving the ability which makes it possible. Sinners are condemned now, because they will not avail themselves of the help offered them ; and who will say this is not just ?

But, faith is not well understood among Christian people. There is a vast deal said about it ; and still a multitude seem not to understand it as a subject, nor be able to put it forth as an act. Why is this ? Are these not born of the Spirit ? We must consider this question by and by,—now we may remark, simply, that faith depends upon the work of the Spirit in the heart, and its development will indicate well the progress of the soul to, and in the new life. Where the Holy Spirit is received, so that he abides in the soul, saving faith will be in exercise there. But, what is saving faith ? Somebody says, “It is just taking God at his word ;” and perhaps a better definition was never given, yet it is not quite all we want.

Faith is taking Jesus to be our Saviour ;—is taking hold of him, as he is revealed to us to be for us all he is revealed as being for any. It is taking him as our atoning Saviour, and looking to him in humble trust that he will secure for us—does now give to us—the full pardon of all our sins. People who have not faith, may be scandalized, by the idea that sin can be forgiven, cancelled, blotted out on the record book of God ; but the soul that believes knows by a sense more unerring than sight that for

him it is done. The promise of God, on which his faith takes hold, is all he wants. He is willing to risk all the interests of time and eternity upon that word alone. He says : Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—his proclamation is “ Whosoever will, let him come to me ;” he comes, and coming knows that though his sins were red like crimson, they are so washed away in his blood, that the stains are all gone, and gone forever. As far as the east is from the west so far hath he removed his transgressions from him. He knows,—that word is used advisedly—there is a knowledge quite as real as any given by sight, or hearing, or touch, or all together ; you do not understand it?—well, that proves nothing, unless it proves that one side of your nature is yet undeveloped, that you are separated from God by wicked works, and need to be born again.

But, Jesus is revealed to us as our divine teacher, and leader, and faith receives him as such, and delights to be taught and led by him.

In John i: 11–13 it is said of him, that, “ he came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God.” To many it, no doubt, appears strange that the people of Christ’s time, and nation, did not receive him. They think that if he were to

come now, they certainly would be ready and glad to receive him, and would follow his lightest word.

But it is not so certain that they would. Jesus was a disappointment to the religious people of his time. He did not come walking in their track. The Pharisees expected the Messiah to be a Pharisee. The Sadducees looked for a ruler who would sympathize with them. The Essenes expected him to be an ascetic like themselves. All were disappointed, and all agreed in rejecting him. It is quite possible that things would take a similar course if he were to come now as a teacher. If he were to come walking in the Baptist track, Pedobaptists would hardly recognize him as the teacher for them. If he should appear as a Presbyterian and a Calvinist, Armenians and believers in the Apostolic Succession would surely fail to see his divine credentials. And so through all the list. Each sect would be blind to his claims if he did not teach according to its standards.

Denominational creeds and organizations have their value no doubt ; but it is more than likely that the master does not fully endorse any of them. It were well if all could feel this, and be humble disciples, rather than the proud and somewhat willful teachers they now sometimes seem to be. Jesus has lived, and does live now in different and quite opposite sects. Fenelon was a Roman Catholic, Newton was an Episcopalian, Bunyan a Baptist, Bramwell a Methodist, James Brainard Taylor a

Congregationalist, and yet the Holy Spirit found a home in each of their hearts. This however is true—he who fully receives Christ as his teacher, will be lifted above sectarian lines and creeds. He may accept them, but he will not be fettered by them. The word and spirit of God will open to him greener pastures, and lead him beside sweeter waters, than the mere sectarian can ever know. He will drink from the mountain spring rather than from the ditch on the plain. Then too all who do fully receive Christ as their teacher by a full and all appropriating faith, are essentially one, not only with him, but with each other. Denominational lines cannot keep them from mutual love and union of soul. The Saviour's prayer "that they all may be one," is answered even now. God speed the day when all shall so receive him, that such lines will be no longer possible, but shall fade away in the clearer light of the perfect day.

But Christ is king as well as Saviour and teacher, and faith must receive him in this relation as well as the others, if it is to be a good proof of the new birth, a true fruit of the Spirit. What is it to receive him as king?

An earthly monarch is making a tour through a part of his dominions. There has been rebellion; but it has ceased and all resistance to his power is at an end. He desires to not only give his subjects an opportunity to manifest their allegiance, but to give them evidence of pardon and of his good will.

Hence his journey or progress. One evening just at night-fall he reaches a place, where on either side of a beautiful valley, through which the highway runs, there stands a noble mansion or castle. These are owned and occupied by men of large wealth and extensive influence. As he enters the valley, he sees on one of the castles his own banner flying. As he comes nearer, the owner comes forth and invites him to be his guest ;—invites him to take possession of everything as his own, to install his servants and retainers in their places, and put his own soldiers on guard ; in a word, to make the castle his home. The invitation is evidently sincere, and on every hand there are evidences of joy that the king has come. The other castle is not opened—no demonstrations are made, no invitation is extended—the master of it sends a message asking for pardon and protection, but excuses himself from personal attention to the king, on the plea that he is busy with his harvests and cannot take time. At the same time he keeps all the castle gates closed, and everything in the posture of defence.

One of these men receives the king as his king, exercises faith in him, trusts him fully. The other does not. Which of them am I like ?—that is the question.

If, by faith, I receive Christ to my heart as King, *everything in me, which is offensive to him must be put away. All evil thoughts must be denied and resisted.* Evil thoughts may often be suggested,

or thrown into the mind in such a way that one is hardly responsible for them. They may come from one's necessary contact with the evil that is in the world, may arise by the laws of association, or may be suggested, probably, by evil spirits. They are not necessarily sinful to us. Their sinfulness depends on their being indulged, cherished in the heart. If Christ is to be our guest, they must be opposed, resisted, and excluded from us. It would be an insult to him to expect him to abide in a heart where they are cherished.

The affections and appetites, must be subdued and controlled so as to be subject to Christ's will.

These, in fallen human nature, are the seat of depravity and the fountain of all sin. Not necessarily sinful of themselves—their unrestrained, lawless action is the ruin of the soul; their subjugation and regulation, by the Holy Spirit, is the completion of the regeneration of the soul. He who aspires to the honor and blessedness of receiving his Lord and Saviour, will strive to keep his body under and bring it into subjection; will crucify “the flesh with the affections and lusts.” He who by faith receives him, will submit all these to his sentence and control. Doubtful of his own ability—or better, sure of his inability to master them, he will gladly avail himself of the power of the king himself, and put them without reserve, into his hands.

All plans and purposes of life, and action, must

be unreservedly submitted to his supervision and control.

Perhaps, the simple relation of a subject to his king or government does not imply this entire surrender of will—this entire abnegation of self. But you and I have been rebels against our king; and if we are ambitious of his confidence and favor; if we would have him become our guest, and abide with us, there must be unconditional submission, and we must learn to say in regard to every thing, “not my will but thine be done.” If we have that faith which is a fruit of the Spirit, and which proves our New Birth, we shall do this, and even though the Master’s will appoint for us the heaviest crosses or the deepest afflictions, we shall be able, trusting his omniscient love, to look up and say from our heart, daily—constantly, “Thy will be done.” Faith as well as love, implies entire consecration.

MEEKNESS.

This is a trait of character not greatly sought for by the world. The successful man is the admired man. “Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself.” And it seems to be thought that a considerable amount of self-assertion is essential to success in any of the world’s callings, not excepting the ministry and other occupations connected with religion. God and the angels may admire meekness; it may be at a premium in heaven; in this world it is certainly at a discount. And yet

it will appear, and that with prominence, in the characters of those who are fully born of God. Where the spirit dwells it will grow.

It is a common opinion that those who profess the perfect love that casteth out all fear, and talk of walking "without condemnation," and of "resting in Jesus," are more or less spiritually proud; but all who really receive the Holy Spirit, so that they are conscious of divine union, and of being filled with the fulness of God, know very well that the coming of the Comforter is attended by such a sense of their own utter vileness and weakness and ill-desert before God, that they desire from the heart to take the lowest possible place before him and before their fellows. If they feel that they have learned some lessons of Jesus which others have not, or are admitted to a closer communion with him than others, there is still no thought that they have been favored because of superior excellence or faithfulness, they know that this could not be; and they only wonder at the goodness of God, and say, as the only reason they can give, "Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." That they are exposed to the temptation of pride, they know as well as others, perhaps better. But they also know that he who has come in to keep their spirits, is "mighty to save" from the sinful workings of their own hearts, as well as from external foes, and they rest in his power and love, expecting him to do all he has promised to do and in every tempta-

tion make a way of escape that they may be able to bear it.

If they do become proud,—if, when they tell of the spiritual riches with which they are endowed, they show a disposition to say “mine own hand hath gotten me this wealth,” rather than to give all—all the glory to God ; then they may be sure, and others may know that they are deceived in regard to their state ; that the Holy Spirit does not abide in them, that they are not fully born of God. Still, a passing word, a momentary flash of the spirit, is not a sufficient test of character to furnish ground of condemnation ; that is, of human condemnation. Moses spoke hasty words at Meribah, he was chastised for them, but they do not prove anything against his character as a man of God. Indeed they served rather to honor his divine keeper, by showing for a moment what Moses without God would be ; thus making the habit of his life appear, as it was, the work of God in him.

It is a little difficult to distinguish meekness and humility from each other. Perhaps we can do it as well as in any way by saying that humility expresses the attitude of a truly Christian soul before God ; and meekness its bearing before the world ; the manner in which it receives the misunderstandings, the misrepresentations, the taunts and jibes, all the bitter words or cruel acts which it may meet. The consecrated Christian—the Bible Christian—will meet with such things. They will come some-

times from friends, sometimes from fellow-disciples, and be hard to bear. But meekness is a fruit of the Spirit, and where he is, it will be borne, will be manifested. The child of God will take patiently the buffetings of his pilgrimage, either remaining silent, like his Master, or speaking the soft words of a loving spirit.

TEMPERANCE.

The word Temperance has been in these latter years almost a technical term. When we see it, we think of the struggle that has been going on against the use of intoxicating beverages. In this struggle, the advocacy of temperance has been a profession. As a matter of course, the term itself has become exalted or abased in our minds, according as we have favored one or the other side, or as we have seen it advocated in a manner to excite admiration or disgust.

Considered however as a fruit of the Spirit, and a result of the New Birth, temperance must have no such narrow or technical import, and should have none of these associations. It may—it is believed that it certainly will—include abstinence from intoxicating beverages, but it also includes much more. Where Paul, in 1 Cor. ix : 25–27, said, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not

as one that beateth the air : but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway," he expressed the Christian idea of temperance. In this passage he stands before us as the Christian athlete, training his body to the greatest possible vigor and efficiency that he might the better go through the race—the struggle that was before him. So the *athletæ* of both ancient and modern times have done. Even the brutal prize-fighter, when he is in training, foregoes all his vices. His body is held under the most rigorous control. His habits must all be most regular, and simple. What he does to win his ignoble victory, the Christian does to win a crown from the hand of Jesus. Christian temperance then, implies entire self-control, and the subjugation of all one's powers to the uses of a true Christian life.

The consecrated Christian will not drink "wine or strong drink," because, he is a Nazarite unto God, and his body is to be treated as the temple of the Holy Ghost. Even wine taken as a beverage—of course it may be taken as a medicine—Paul recommended Timothy to take it so—is an indulgence which will always weaken the soul in its struggles toward God and holiness. It may stimulate the intellect, and give a sort of inspiration that may be mistaken for spiritual aid. Even ministers have been thought, and possibly have thought themselves, spiritually inspired, when inspired only by wine or

tobacco. But the experience of the Christian world is believed to be uniform on this point that where resort is had to artificial stimulants for the sake of the excitement they give, the Holy Spirit is grieved and flies away. God takes the soul that comes to him in its weakness and impurity, just as it is ; he does not ask that it be made holy before he accepts it ; he proposes to wash and cleanse it for himself ; and doing so he expects, and surely has a right to expect to be its joy and strength.

But again, the child of God will deny himself the use of intoxicating beverages, because by using them, he will encourage and strengthen others in their use, and so promote the temporal and eternal ruin of souls. His language is not, "Am I my brother's keeper ?" but rather, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

Tobacco has been mentioned. It appears to be quite commonly regarded as not at all unchristian or intemperate to use tobacco. Many a minister can hardly study his sermons without his pipe or cigar, and needs its stimulus in the pulpit, while his deacons mayhap would be so restless that the sermon would do them no good were they without their tobacco. Perhaps the use of tobacco should hardly be called a positive vice. It certainly is an uncleanly habit that injures many persons, seldom if ever does real good, is an expense to many that they can not well bear, and leads to association with

positive vice. More than almost any other habit, it enslaves its victims. A confirmed tobacco-user is not master of himself ; does not possess that self-control which is essential to temperance.

When entire consecration has become the experience of any one, it has usually led to the giving up of this habit. When Jesus cleanses the temple of the heart, and makes it his abode, it will hardly remain long defiled with tobacco.

Christian Temperance will also take cognizance of our daily habits of eating and drinking. It does not require asceticism. Its idea is not that the body is the enemy of the Spirit, and is to be macerated and weakened by rigorous fasting, and abstinence from all pleasant food ; but rather that we should eat and drink for strength and usefulness, and to the glory of God. This one cannot do who indulges in gluttony, or in eating for the mere pleasure of eating at unseasonable hours.

Habits of dress, and personal adornment, will also be under the care of Temperance. It has been always felt by those who have fully given themselves to Christ, that they must not be the slaves of fashion. Some have felt that all adornments must be put off. Others that this was not necessary or wise. No uniform rule has ever been adopted, probably none ever will be ; it is at least doubtful, if one is desirable. But the rule of subordinating every thing to the real good of ourselves and others, must be applied according to the wisdom which God shall give to each one.

Christian homes furnish abundant opportunities for the manifestation and exercise of this grace. Homes in the more crowded parts of our country, seem to be almost passing from the list of necessities to that of luxuries. There is so much of expensive and ostentatious display on the part of those who can command means for it ; and so much of emulation among those who have less means, that a multitude of young men are unwilling to marry, perhaps fear to before they become rich ; and as many of them never do become so, marriages seem almost to be growing out of fashion except among the rich or the very poor. Similar reasons probably lead many who are married to dread the birth of children, because they may be an expense and a hindrance to indulgence in worldly pleasures, and to take unholy and murderous means to prevent it. It looks sometimes as though in this respect things were going on from bad to worse, and as though virtuous Christian homes where children are received as from the Lord, a blessed trust from him, would become almost rare. God only knows what is before us. But Christian men and women, if they are willing to be temperate in all that relates to their home life ; and subordinate everything to the principles of the gospel, may do much to check this tendency. They may show to those around them that happy homes can be made on moderate means ; and that without emulating the rich, they can be truly self-respectful.

Truly, “godliness is profitable to all things

having promise of the life that now is," as well as, "of that which is to come." But in order to be profitable it must be controlling. The whole life must be brought into subjection, and we must walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

In 1 John v: 4, the apostle says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith." The world is the antagonist of Christian life and progress ; but a living faith born or begotten of God in the soul is more than a match for it, and will surely overcome. This is the doctrine of this text.

The opposition of the world to one who is trying to please God, is exhibited sometimes in persecution and direct opposition, oftener by temptation and seductive arts, but more constantly and powerfully than in both these ways, by that nameless influence that is always exerted by a community of persons on the individuals composing it. This influence is not exactly public opinion, it is more subtle and imponderable, and also more pervasive and powerful than that. It is a sort of moral atmosphere which no man can see, but which every man feels. Now and then, as in seasons of revival, and in a few favored places, the influence is felt on the side of godliness ; but almost everywhere and always it is opposed to it. Indeed, so constantly is this true,

that the Bible always speaks of the world as a power opposed to God, and represents the Christian as in a constant warfare with it.

The child of God will not of himself and by his own will and strength triumph over this influence. Unaided by divine power he might make good resolutions and struggle for a time to keep them, but he would be soon overborne by the current, and floated off with the crowd. But if by a living faith he entertains in himself the Holy Spirit, then he will be kept by the power of God, and will become a power himself, able to not only stand against the pressure, but make headway against it. He will grow stronger with every conflict, and become not only a conqueror, but more than a conqueror of all the leagued forces of evil.

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Rom. viii: 16. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” 1 John, v: 10.

There are many who think that true Christian modesty will manifest itself in doubts of one's adoption ; that real divine enlightenment will make one feel so unworthy of God's favor, that it will be but natural to fear that he does not accept him.

There is a mistake here. The humility that doubts is not perfect. The divine enlightenment that excites fear, is but the partial work of the

Spirit. When the soul so sinks into nothing before God, that Jesus becomes its all in all, and is received as a full Saviour, its worthiness or unworthiness, its goodness or badness, ceases to be thought of as having anything to do with its acceptance by Christ. A sense of utter unworthiness is the habit and posture of the soul before God, and if you were to reveal to such a one a depth of sinfulness in his nature that he had never dreamed of, you would only have driven him closer to Christ and made him feel more the immeasurable and unutterable love that had taught him to say "Abba Father." "He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

When the Holy Spirit comes as the Comforter to abide in us he brings such a sense of divine union that we cry out in the words of a hymn which our fathers used to sing more than we do,

"But this I do find—we two are so joined,
He can't live in glory and leave me behind."

CONTINUANCE OF LIFE.

There are few outward signs of Christian character which may not be sometimes exhibited under circumstances of sympathetic or emotional excitement by unregenerate persons. Every observant person who has been much in religious meetings knows that it is very easy to become imitators of the words, manners and even tones of those we hear speak and pray. And wherever the gospel has been preached for a length of time, there are many scattered

around who have believed themselves, and others have believed them to be Christians, but time and trial have proved them otherwise.

Only continued signs of life prove vitality in what seems to live. A dead body may be galvanized into motion ; a tree severed from its root may yet be so set in the ground as to seem for a time a living tree ; a branch may be so skilfully fastened to a vine as to appear a living part of it ; but neither body, nor tree, nor branch will have continuance of life.

In John viii. 31, Jesus said to those who professed to believe on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." This was equivalent to saying, "I see that your present impulses are right, perhaps your purposes are, but it will need something more than impulses and resolutions to enable you to follow and obey me long ; if you continue to obey me, to keep my word, you will show that a new life has indeed begun in you and that you are my disciples."

Paul in Col. i, 21-23, says, "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight ; if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Reconciled, in this place means harmonized with God and includes regeneration. The meaning is that

continuance in the life of the gospel, and nothing short of this, would prove their union with God, their new birth.

Peter speaks of God's children, as "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." Many seem to have lost the word faith from their idea of this passage, and to think only that it promises salvation to Christians. This is losing the real point. The faith which was in Peter's mind as the means by which the saints are kept, was a living, active, earnest clinging of the soul to God. Such faith cannot be predicated of one who is not truly alive and awake and struggling as a wrestler for the prize.

In 1 John iii. 9, we read, "Whosoever is born"—or begotten—"of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." This is a strong assertion of two principles, viz., that the life of God's child is a continuing life, and that it is a controlling life. The idea is, that every life has its own type and manner of development. One who is born by natural generation will be a child of the flesh, "carnal, sold under sin," and cannot fail to walk after the flesh; so one who is begotten of God will receive God's nature, and will be holy, walking "not after the flesh but after the Spirit;" and because the vitalizing force, the "seed" remaineth in him, ever renewing the life it gave, he will continue to so walk, being led by the Spirit, and, in his manifested

life will put on "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Of course the inability of one born of God to commit sin, must lie only in this, that because, from his God-derived nature and state of heart, he loves holiness and hates sin, he will certainly follow what he loves and shun what he hates. We are not to understand from the passage that it is absolutely impossible for one born of God to commit sin; the Scriptures do not allow us to take that ground; but they do fully warrant us in saying that one fully regenerated will be good and practically holy, and will, day by day, live in the love and service of God.

" Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild,
Upright, simple, free from art,
Make me as a weaned child,
From distrust and envy free,
Pleased with all that pleases thee.

" What thou shalt to-day provide,
Let me as a child receive ;
What to-morrow may betide,
Calmly to thy wisdom leave ;
'Tis enough that thou wilt care ;
Why should I the burden bear?

" As a little child relies
On a care beyond his own,
Knows he's neither strong nor wise,
Fears to stir a step alone ;
Let me thus with thee abide,
As my Father, Guard, and Guide.

“ Thus preserved from Satan’s wiles,
Safe from dangers, free from fears,
May I live upon thy smiles
Till the promised hour appears ;
When the sons of God shall prove
All their Father’s boundless love.”

Newton.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONVERSION.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.”

1 *Cor.*, iii. 1.

IF the attempt which has been made to characterize a Bible Christian has been successful, and in the line of truth, it has been demonstrated that regeneration is a change so radical and thorough as to necessarily produce in those who are its subjects a good life,—a life that may be fairly and truthfully called holy.

The task which is now before us is not a pleasant one. It is a difficult one. It seems necessary to compare, as well as we may, the current religious life of Christian people—church members—at the present day with the Bible standard. Of course, this can be done only in a very general and imperfect way ; and one attempting it can hardly hope to escape being thought uncharitable and censorious.

Are Christian people generally, as we meet them in evangelical churches, Bible Christians ? Do they bear the traits that we have found to characterize those who are born of God ?

To ask these questions is almost to answer them. We know that a very large proportion of such persons, not only make no profession of living holy lives, but evidently think it is not expected of them to do so. They appear satisfied if they can be religious, in a way, on Sundays and special occasions, and keep on what seems to them about the level of other professedly Christian people. They are also, many of them, inclined, if holiness be mentioned as a Christian attainment, to associate it with perfectionism, and fanaticism, and so dismiss it from their thought, or if not, to regard it as an unreasonable thing to expect of any one ; and they may possibly feel a little pride or something that resembles it “as the mist resembles the rain,” because they are conscious of being sinners every day.

Now, it is no part of the purpose of these papers to advocate the idea that a sinless state is a practicable, or even possible attainment in this life ; but they will utterly miss their aim if they do not produce the impression upon the attentive reader, that there is for him, and for every disciple of Christ, the possible attainment, of such a state of consecration to Christ, and harmony of will with him, as that one may be consciously set apart—devoted, sanctified to him in body, soul and spirit, and be so filled with love as to be without fear or a sense of condemnation.

A state of mind and heart, such that one can be contented while conscious of daily sin, and be

careless in regard to that attainment in holy living which is within his reach, seems hardly possible to one born of God. Yet it is the state—very nearly if not exactly, of multitudes who call themselves children of God.

And yet, probably most of these have been changed from what they once were ; and are not now living the old life of nature and of rebellion against God. Indeed they no doubt feel something of real love to God, and some of them become willing and earnest workers in the Lord's vineyard. Are they truly born of God ? This is the problem ; how shall we solve it ?

We have already seen that it is likely to be said in explanation of their condition, that regeneration is only the very beginning of the new life—is like the implantation of a germ—an embryo, and that these Christians are only babes and will grow and become developed hereafter.

This is a plausible suggestion, and probably is quite commonly accepted as a sufficient solution of the difficulty. It is, however, open to two objections.

1. The Bible idea of the new birth is, as we have tried to show, that it is such a change of the heart, of the motive forces and affinities of the soul, that one who has experienced it will live a life habitually pure, good and godly ; and,

2. This class of Christians do not, as a rule, grow much. They have been in the church—well,

any number of years, some of them half a century, and yet they hardly exhibit more of love, of faith, of consecration, of ability and willingness to work for the Master, than they did when they were first welcomed to the church as young converts. Indeed in many cases there seems to be evident and positive retrogression.

No, the problem is not to be solved in this way.

The difficulty might be evaded or lost sight of, if we could drop out of mind the difference between the gospel and the law. Indeed this seems to be done by many, so that the gospel is looked upon only as a modified and easier system of law. Much that is called gospel preaching is very legal in its character. It is an inculcation of duty, and a setting forth of the rewards of duty done, of work performed for God, and may be faithful and earnest, and in a measure successful ; but it does not grasp the great gospel idea, that was revealed to Jeremiah in the words,—“Behold the days come saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah—I will write my law on their hearts and print it on their inward parts.” If we had none but a legal gospel, we might fairly attribute all Christian shortcomings to human frailty, and say when challenged upon the point, that the gospel is all right, and God is ready to help, but “men are so weak,” and “nobody is perfect,” etc. But under the “new Covenant”—the Gospel, this does not meet the occasion.

In regeneration, God is now writing his law upon men's hearts—that is, he is making them love it and keep it ; and when any do not love it and keep it, we must conclude, either that regeneration is a failure, or else that in these cases it is not a completed work.

But let us seek a solution of our difficulty in another direction. It has been already said that the class we are studying do appear to be really changed from the life of nature. Let us study this change, and the resulting life, and try to draw our theory from the facts in the case.

1. *This change, which we call Conversion is commonly preceded by a sense of guilt, and of condemnation by God.*

This is called conviction of sin. It is produced by the word of God, applied and demonstrated by the Holy Spirit. The purpose for which it is produced is often mistaken. Sinners often seem to depend upon it as in some sort, a passport to the divine favor. They do not really feel that there is any merit in it, but they have an indistinct idea that somehow, it may propitiate God, and are often deeply troubled if they do not seem to themselves to feel as deeply as others have expressed, who have found hope.

To one who truly knows God and the way of salvation, it seems strange for any one to imagine that any kind of sorrowful feeling would make God more propitious to the soul. But repentance has been

wrongly understood, wrongly preached, often ; and then, there is no doubt, in many minds an indistinct and, it may be, half unconscious feeling that there is a sort of atonement in pain. Sometimes it would seem, from words we hear casually dropped, that those who have been a good deal troubled, are inclined to blame God, and think him hard and unkind, because he does not give them the hope that their sins have been forgiven. They think that they have suffered enough, have suffered more than many others who are rejoicing in hope. It certainly seems, that even impenitent and unenlightened sinners might know, if they would think, that God cannot be propitiated by a sinner's pain. But, it is hard to let go of all dependence upon what self can do, and just fall, helpless and condemned, upon the mercy of God.

The truth is, God uses conviction of sin, and sorrow of heart, as a means of gently compelling men to come to Jesus. He does not care to have them suffer, he does care to have them fly from their sinful ways to Jesus, and become his trusting servants. If they will do this without the pain, it is, perhaps, just as well, but few will do it. Cases, however, may and do occur where men who have lived many years in sin and neglect of all God's claims, are led, in some way, to think of the rightness and reasonableness of those claims, and of the folly of a sinful life, and to make up their mind, calmly, and in the same way that they make it up

on any matter of business, that they will, to the best of their knowledge and ability, become God's servants. Such cases are probably rare, but there is now and then one that we see coming to God in this way, and without any excited or unusual feeling, bowing himself to the yoke of Christ, and humbly seeking the teaching of God's word and spirit, going on in the path of obedience until he becomes a truly consecrated Christian, and a happy Christian. "If any man will do God's will he shall know of the doctrine;" shall be enlightened and led as he may need. The Holy Spirit convinces men of sin, and makes them fear the judgment to come, not to make them fit to be received by Jesus, but simply to induce them to come to him.

2. The change we are studying is also usually preceded by earnest and persevering prayer for help and pardon.

It is not God's way to cast pearls before swine,—he will not give the priceless blessings of the gospel to those who do not feel the need of them, and will not prize them. When he designs to give, he first awakens a sense of want and of desire. In one whom he is leading to Christ, he will arouse such a sense of danger and helplessness, as will almost compel a heartfelt cry for assistance, a reaching forth of both hands to Jesus. Such a reaching forth of the soul may not take the form of vocal prayer, it may be like the groping of one in total darkness for something to help him—he hardly knows what ;

it may seem only like a despairing wail, but if directed to God he will hear and understand it. Of course there is no merit in such prayer—nor in any other, for the matter of that—and God is under no obligation to hear it, but he will hear and answer. “They who ask shall receive ; they who seek shall find ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Such prayer is not that of the wicked, of such as regard iniquity in their hearts,—which will not be heard.

3. This change is usually preceded, is always attended, by a voluntary and conscious decision of purpose, which amounts to submission to God’s will, and a turning of the soul from sin to God.

This decision leads to something equivalent to Paul’s question, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” The occasion which calls it forth will vary as individuals and circumstances differ ; sometimes what seems a very trifling thing will lead to it ; a mere passing thought may appear to change the current of one’s life.

A young man brought up under religious influences, had for years been led from time to time to think seriously of his need of salvation, but had put the subject by and was living a thoughtless sort of life. There was to be a school exhibition with some dramatic performances, not far from his home. He had made an arrangement with an associate to attend it. While on the way from his friend’s home to his own, it occurred to his mind that on that

evening in an adjoining neighborhood, there was to be a meeting where Christians would be gathered, praying for the salvation of such as he. The question arose; "Ought I not to go there rather than to a place of amusement?" He was troubled, and immediately would have been glad if his engagement with his friend had not been made. It would be very disagreeable to withdraw it; yet to go might be slighting God's call. He turned aside, and leaning upon a wall by the highway-side thought, and then prayed for strength to do right. The decision was soon made. He went back and withdrew his engagement and in the evening went to the meeting. A few days, perhaps a week later he found himself looking up to Jesus as his Saviour. That decision was a turning point in his life.

In revivals where inquiry meetings or "anxious seats" are used, these often furnish the occasion for such a decision. Probably in thousands of instances the decision to rise up and say publicly, either by voice or act, "I desire to become a Christian," has been equivalent to turning to God and has been accepted by him.

4. *This change is usually attended by a new and more or less surprising view of Christ as the Saviour.*

The experience of the church teaches us not to speak too positively in regard to any feature of the work of God in the soul, because cases vary so much; and the important thing is, that one does

truly come to Christ, and not the exercises and views which attend his coming. Very commonly there is great dependence upon this first view of Christ as the Saviour. The moment when it occurs is regarded as the instant of regeneration; or, as it is usually called, conversion. Certainly it is not strange when an awakened sinner burdened with a sense of guilt, and feeling himself utterly unworthy and hell-deserving, is enabled for the first time to look up and see Jesus as the friend of sinners and the helper for such as he, and begins to hope that his sins are forgiven, that the day when this occurs should be marked as a white day in the calendar of life. The emotions are apt to be strongly excited, and often the change seems like one from death to life, almost like one from hell to heaven.

And yet every pastor or observing Christian, knows that there are a multitude of cases where the view of the Saviour seems remarkably clear, and the feelings are most deeply moved, in which the subsequent life does not prove a changed heart. And on the other hand there are many who can remember no moment of change, no sudden revealing of Christ in the soul, who yet give good evidence of loving God, and of being his true children.

Is there then no reliance to be put on what is commonly called Christian experience? Must we conclude that all our feelings and thoughts are liable to deceive us; and that we cannot be sure in regard to any mental exercises, that they indicate the new-

birth ? We certainly must depend chiefly upon the fruits borne by the tree or vine, to show its character ; we must depend upon the life to prove the change of heart. Still, when a sinner has been awakened from a careless life, and been convicted of his guilt and danger, and has cried to God for help, and then has been enabled to look up to Jesus as his Saviour, and to hope in him that his sins are forgiven ; there is very good reason to believe him so changed that he will live a different, and in many respects a godly life ; will “ bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”

This brings us to the inquiry ; how do young converts and those who stand on the same general religious level with them, exhibit “ the fruits of the Spirit,”—those traits of the Bible Christian that we have seen do characterize the truly regenerated ?

And again we will follow the list given in Gal. v: 22, 23, and inquire in regard to

THEIR LOVE.

Let it be understood now, in the beginning, that our inquiry is not whether young converts exhibit these traits, but how they exhibit them. It would be folly, or something worse, to deny that young converts do generally show that they love God, and his cause and people. But we may question the permanence and character of their love, it is believed, without either folly or injustice. If we study it carefully, we shall probably find that the love of

converted persons is in most cases, *largely emotional*, and owes most of its power to control the life to some exterior exciting cause.

First-love is often strong, warm, trustful, and to a degree self-sacrificing and benevolent, and may rise to ecstasy. The love of revived Christians is similar in character. Take the disciple when the fire is burning, and he seems—is, often, a power for good, and you feel that you have found one whom you may fully trust—may lean upon as a pillar in the temple of God. Wait until emotional reaction takes place, and very likely your strong man, your worker and burden-bearer has disappeared ; and in place of your pillar, there stands one of the babes in Christ, such as Paul called the Corinthians, needing not only to be fed with milk, but often to be humored and coaxed and flattered, like a spoiled child. No, the average religious life of our day, when revivals are not going on, shows a very uncertain if not low type of love.

It is not consecrating as it should be.

There are Christians everywhere, probably, who love to give and work for the cause of God ; who give because they love, but almost everywhere we find those who complain and almost groan under what they call the burdens of the church. Burdens indeed ! Does love complain of burdens and try to shirk when something is to be done for the object of love ? Many a man who is worth thousands thinks it hard to pay a few dollars for the home ex-

penses of his church, and if he gives a dollar a year to send the gospel to the heathen, thinks he has been quite benevolent. Many a woman can pay nothing for the cause of Christ, and yet can find a good many dollars if a fancy in dress or jewelry is to be gratified. Families too poor to have even a quarter of a dollar for religious purposes, can all go to see every traveling circus that comes around.

It is usually much easier to get money for things connected with the church, if some form of selfishness can be appealed to. To have the finest meeting-house, the tallest spire, the best organ, the most popular preacher or the best choir in town, will loosen the strings of purses that had else been tightly closed. The honor of being called liberal will sometimes work wonders. Religious lotteries and suppers with their various concomitants will draw money from professedly religious people, when love alone will call in vain.

It has been often said in recent years that there were fewer of the sons of the church coming into the ministry than formerly; also, that the reason was that ministers were so poorly paid.

Other professions are said to be more lucrative and so more attractive. There are plenty of instances no doubt where churches are shamefully penurious and neglectful of their pastors. But the most painful thing about it is, the inference which we must draw, that Christian young men are standing, looking at the ministry as a profession and

weighing their chances for a good position, and a competence if they enter it, and are not ashamed of doing so.

It seems hardly to be thought that love to God and to the souls of men is a sufficient motive to lead one to give himself to the work of God, at any sacrifice. Thoughts on this point lead to the remark that,

The worship of the church shows her love to be imperfect.

In some cases—would God there were not many such—it is too evident that pastors are sought for who possess brilliant and attractive gifts, while very little thought is given to their spiritual knowledge, or the fulness of their union with God. This being the case, it will be strange if some, at least, among the ministers are not more anxious to be pulpit orators than to feed the flock of God with “the sincere milk of the word;” strange, if sermons do not become brilliant essays—where they can, and the public prayers, “eloquent addresses to the Deity”—or to the audience. Equally strange if the songs of Zion do not become performances of the choir, and if the æsthetic and the sentimental do not swallow up devotion; the pulpit and the pews backsliding from God together.

Nor may the smaller and weaker churches and ministers take the credit to themselves that this state of things exists only among the wealthier churches and more popular ministers. Most of us

feel, more or less, the same temptations, and may be—according to our ability—following in the same track. The large and wealthy city church appears little more likely to be formal and loveless in her worship than the little hamlet church where poverty only, very likely, prevents the imitation of city customs.

Is it not largely to provide a remedy for this state of things that so much dependence has come to be put upon the so called revival meetings of this time? Is it not a tacit confession of the want of power in ordinary church worship that “Evangelists” must be called in and “gospel meetings” held, and “Gospel Hymns” sung; just as though the ordinary meetings of the church were not gospel meetings, and no special blessing was to be expected through them.

O, if the time ever comes, when Christians generally, and habitually meet on Lord’s day and at other times simply and in earnest to worship God, then he will come into the midst of them and give them power to prevail over all their difficulties.

The closets, and to an extent the family altars of Christian people must tell their story to conscience and God; we cannot scrutinize them; and yet we may be sure that where there is earnest and habitual worship in closets and homes, there will be public worship that shall be in spirit and in truth. Loving communion with God will make itself felt beyond the place and hour of prayer.

The type of love that we see commonly in the church does not appear to arise from assimilation to God.

God is loved, but he seems to be loved chiefly because he is our benefactor. "We love him because he first loved us." This means with many, it is believed, we love him because he has been good to us, loves us, and is going to save us. It follows, as a matter of course, when doubts and darkness come, and the assurance of God's love is lost, that we lose in a great measure the sense of love to him. Such love must of necessity be intermittent and untrustworthy.

Brotherly love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."

Now, people who love each other are likely to love each other's society and to seek it; they are usually careful of each other's feelings, and each is pained by the other's sorrow: they are patient of the faults of those they love, and disposed to be silent in regard to them: the happiness and prosperity of loved ones will be their joy and will be aided by them if possible.

Do we see these signs of love manifested among Christians simply because they are Christians? Sometimes, certainly. But we also see much that is contrary to love. Christ's professed followers are everywhere divided into sects and parties, and between these there is much of unloving rivalry. Not seldom, there arise jealousies and strife, that to a

looker-on seems unholy and hateful. Ministers and denominational leaders, in order to build up their church or party, resort to very questionable means.

Members of the same church do not always show love for each other. There is many a church that is powerless for good to-day, because there is "hatred, variation, wrath and strife" among the members. And this has more often than otherwise grown out of some very small thing. By a careless word somebody's tongue has set on fire the course of nature, and the tale-bearer's tongue, "set on fire of hell," has helped on the flame, until there seems nothing left in that Zion but ashes and bitter dust.

This sad picture might be extended far, but we turn from it gladly to inquire in regard to

JOY

as a trait of those we call converted.

Young converts are often heard to say something like this, "I have felt more real joy since I found Jesus than in all my life before." What they say is probably true. The joys of earth are seldom quite satisfying,—There are thorns around most earthly roses ; and bitter dregs that must be swallowed in most cups of pleasure. And when a soul first grasps its new-born hope, and looks up to God as a friend, and to Jesus as a loving Saviour, and feels in his heart the glow of love, and the blessedness of trust, it would be strange if he did not feel a joy that would make all earthly joys grow pale, and

seem worthless in comparison with it. This joy satisfies the soul as no earthly joy can. He who has true joy in God is to a great extent independent of other sources of pleasure.

But it cannot be denied that this joy does not, in many cases prove permanent. We must admit that often the one who has told us of this great and unequaled joy, is found before very long turning back to worldly, and it may be sinful pleasures. How is this ? unbelievers notice the fact and urge it against the reality of the New Birth. How shall we explain it ?

Is not this the truth in the case ? The new-born joy of converts—like their love—is largely emotional. It is a mood—“a frame of mind” which, excited partly by causes exterior to themselves, is liable to pass away with changing circumstances. They rejoice because they believe their sins forgiven, because they have found the pearl of great price. They think God loves them, they are sure that Christians love them. If now they are from any cause led to doubt God’s love and the reality of the change in them, a cloud will come over them which will blot out all their joy in darkness. The joy of which they told was real, but like a pleasant meal eaten yesterday it does not satisfy the craving of to-day, and so the hungry soul seeks other food.

There is another thing about this evanescent joy. The Holy Spirit comes to the hearts of converted persons and sheds a joy upon them that is

due to him alone. But he does not always stay. If the heart and life be not wholly opened to his control ; if self strives to sit upon the throne in the soul with God ; if the will rises up against God's will ; if he be not permitted to drive out all the buyers and sellers, and remove the tables of the money-changers from the temple of the heart, his visit will be short, and when he goes, joy will go, and a sense of condemnation and estrangement from God will come. He may come back—thank God, he does come back, to many of us again and again, comes courting the love and confidence of the poor wayward soul, and when he comes there is a revival in one heart at least.

PEACE

stands next in the list of the fruits of the Spirit.

Some years ago the writer came into a new experience of God's peace. It was in connection with the revealing of Christ in his soul as sanctifier and keeper, and was a new as well as most blessed experience. The love and joy of that time were most precious, but they were not so new—so unlike what he had known before. The peace—so deep, so full, so indescribable—because passing all understanding—was new, and in its perfect restfulness was one of the most marked features of the experience. Negative peace—the absence of enmity toward both God and man was not new ; that had been in a good degree slain at his conversion years before. But all

along there had been a lack of restful peace. Even in times of revival, when God seemed nearest and most a friend, there was still an uneasy sense of danger, a feeling that at any moment the spirit of love and joy might take wing and fly away. There was not a sense of identity of interest, of oneness with God. Self still rose up, opposed in many things to God's will. The law in his members warring against the law of his mind, destroyed peace, and oftentimes extorted from him the despairing wail, "O, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?"

Somewhat careful observation, extending over many years, has led to the full conviction that his case was no uncommon one. Indeed, most Christian people seem to lack a reposeful feeling in regard to their relations with God. The thought is, if I am faithful I shall be happy and safe ; but how to be faithful—that is the question. Most of us learn our own weakness so soon and so well that however often we may make good resolutions we hardly expect to do otherwise than break them, and fail and sin. We understand the seventh of Romans well, the eighth, not so well. We live in warfare and in defeat, not in victory and peace.

When the Holy Spirit comes as the abiding, indwelling keeper of the heart, peace comes. His presence gives such a sense of oneness with God, such loss of self in God, that the ineffable peace in which God dwells becomes infused through all the

soul, filling it according to its measure. Then the uniform testimony is “I never knew peace—perfect peace—before.”

It is worthy of note here that the Bible speaks of God’s peace as a controlling, masterful thing in the heart where it is. “Let the peace of God *rule* in your hearts.” “The peace of God which passeth all understanding *shall keep* your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

We conclude that if God’s peace is in us, we shall be men of peace, peace-lovers and peace-makers. The children of Zion are not all such.

LONG-SUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS.

These traits of regenerate character we must pass with but a brief remark. They are not so important as indicating one’s state because they are, in a degree, natural traits, and are exhibited by the impenitent often in a good degree. We shall of course find them among Christian people. But if we look for them, we shall probably be saddened by finding that in very many cases the naturally quick-tempered, remain impatient; the rough and ungentle are still harsh in word and manner, regardless of the feelings of others; and the selfish and cruel remain grasping and oppressive. There can be no doubt that many are hindered from feeling the claims of religion by the ungracious lives of those who in religious meetings may talk of “inward joys and sins forgiven.”

FAITH.

This element of Christian character is, as we have seen, the very foundation of it. One cannot begin to be a Christian without faith ; and the character of one's faith will indicate his progress and attainment in the divine life. One who is truly converted must believe in Christ, must exercise a true faith in him, there is no doubt of that. But it is very possible that his faith may not be a full one—a faith like a grain of mustard seed, round, full, warm, active, perfect. Instead, it is apt to have flat sides and defective places, and to grasp the Saviour in only part of his relations to the soul.

It has been already remarked that God's usual method in bestowing spiritual blessings is to give only to supply a felt want, and in answer to believing prayer.

Now when an awakened, convicted sinner comes to God through Christ, what he feels the need of—his great want, is the forgiveness of his sins. He commonly has but little fear but that if he can be forgiven, it will be easy for him to live a Christian life and remain in God's favor. Few at conversion know much of “the plague of their own hearts,” and of their utter weakness and inability to live holy lives. Forgiveness is everything to them ; and when Jesus has been revealed to them as the one who can and does forgive their sins, it is enough ; it is all the salvation they need. Nor is this trust in Christ

for pardon something which is likely to soon pass away. The truth that Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sin is so written upon the heart of the truly converted one, that he will be little likely to forget it. So far his faith may be said to be full. It beholds the lamb of God. It feeds upon him as the true paschal lamb. It grasps him as friend and redeemer.

But something more is needful in order that the convert become a developed Christian. If he stops here as many do, he will be like those Galatians, who having begun in the Spirit were found striving to be made perfect by the flesh, for whom Paul said he travailed in birth again till Christ be formed within them.

The truth is that if at his conversion he had heard Christ preached ever so plainly, as the sanctifier and keeper of the soul, he would not probably have taken hold of him as such, because he had not yet learned his need of a keeper and sanctifier. But it happens that very often he is not so preached. The preacher may know as little of him in these relations as the neophyte himself. A great deal of the religious teaching of the church is defective in regard to Christ.

How will it be—when after months—years it may be, of painful experience of his own weakness and utter inability to keep himself in the love of God; when after resolutions made again and again, and many prayers and tears over failure, the disci-

ple finds himself weak as ever, looking around for help and guidance—will he be told of the Spirit of Christ given and appointed to be the indwelling and all powerful keeper of the heart? Probably not; but instead, that all Christians have the same trouble, and that he must struggle and fight on till death, and then he will be free from all sin. Human effort and death, these are the helpers—the sanctifiers offered him.

Surely, it will not be strange if, under such circumstances, there shall be failure to receive the grace that is sufficient, and take hold of the strength that is made perfect in weakness. It is not strange that the faith of the church is weak in regard to sanctification and the Christian life.

There is another direction in which the faith of the church is defective. There must be wide-spread failure to accept Christ as our Prophet—our authoritative teacher.

Everywhere the people of God are divided up into sects and parties, manifesting often a good deal of party spirit; and when first love subsides, converts often exhibit a good deal of self-will in regard to what they receive as truth. There is not, it is true, the amount of controversy between Christians of different names that there used to be, but that may be from a spirit like that of Gallic—"caring for none of these things," rather than because there is more of docility, and the little child-like spirit that delights in being led in all things by the Master.

There is much said about Christian union, but the common thought seems to be that union must come by compromise, and a mutual surrender of convictions and beliefs more or less important. True union will hardly come in that way. It will come, when the Holy Spirit shall be so poured out that the mass of Christian people shall be converted anew, and become such little children as the disciples became on the day of Pentecost. Then the barriers that education, and prejudice, and party-spirit, and self-will, have built will be swept away, and the multitude that believe will be of one heart and of one soul and none will say that the things that he possesses are his own.

Again,—the faith of the church seems defective in its grasp of Christ as King and Master.

There is everywhere a want of ability to say from the heart, “Not my will but thine, O God, be done.” We all profess to believe that “all things shall work together for good to them who love God,” but there is much of fretfulness and repining instead of humble and sweet acquiescence when God’s providence seems adverse and afflictive.

There is also a very visible lack of deference to God’s will in choosing our course and pursuits in life. Plans are laid, and arrangements entered into, without inquiring whether Jesus will approve. Bargains are made with but little reference to the Golden Rule. Pleasures are sought which are felt to be questionable, if not sinful, and which would have

been shunned when first-love was warm, and faith saw Jesus near.

So, too, plain teachings, and even commands of God are disregarded if pride or self-interest conflict with them. Christians will go to meeting and sing loudly, "Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee, Even though it be a cross that raiseth me," and then if a cross is laid in their way they will avert their faces and pass by on the other side.

But, once more,—the faith of young converts, and may we not say of Christians generally? is exceedingly dependent on outward circumstances, on what they can see.

People generally trust God well when the prospect before them is bright and promising,—not so well when darkness and gloom enshroud them. If a prayer-meeting be more than usually full and interesting, we are likely to hear, at once, prophecies of a revival, and talk of strong faith in God. Next week when it is thin and dull, the faith has all evaporated. Christian farmers trust God very well when the weather is fine and crop prospects good. Even ministers seem to have more faith when a good salary is pledged to them, than when they have nothing but God's naked promise to look to.

A good illustration of this kind of faith is given in the account of Peter's walking on the sea. He saw the Master on the water, saw that the unstable, restless waves were like a crystal pavement under his feet, and was inspired, at once, with such confidence

in his power as to be willing at his bidding to go and walk by his side. But alas ! his faith depended upon sight, and when the wind blew hard, and a great wave rose between him and the Lord it failed and he began to sink. So afterwards, when the disciples were gathered around Jesus in the garden, they had strong faith in him ; they had witnessed many exhibitions of his power ; they did not doubt his Messiahship nor his ability to foil his cruel foes ; yet their faith depended upon seeing the continued exercise of his power, and when they saw him in the hands of the mob, led away unresisting, they all forsook him and fled, and the bold and confident Peter is soon swearing that he does not know any such man as Jesus of Nazareth.

But there came a change to Peter and the others. The day of Pentecost brought the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then Christ came as he had promised, not to be *with*, but to be *in* them. From that time onward their faith had its sufficient source within themselves, and was not dependent upon sight nor upon outward circumstances. Henceforth it seemed as natural to them to trust God as to breathe. God grant that such a change may come to all of us.

Of course a faith that is dependent upon sight must be always weak and fluctuating. It is not the sort that can remove mountains, or plant sycamine trees in the sea. There is in it neither power nor rest in any considerable degree ; and it is not too

much to say that Zion is paralyzed by the unbelief of her children.

MEEKNESS AND TEMPERANCE.

These two complete the list of the fruits of the Spirit.

We have already seen that those who are fully born of the Spirit will exhibit them as characteristic traits. How are they exhibited in the current Christian life of the church ?

If we look for meekness we shall find some who are truly meek. We shall also find many who are not. The conviction will probably grow upon us that self is the important thing with most. Few will bear to have their self-love wounded. Churches are being torn asunder all the time because somebody's feelings have been hurt. Or, if it do not go so far as that, there is jealousy and coldness separating those who ought to be working together in love, and thus destroying their power for good.

In the matter of temperance we shall find that while most in this day are technically temperate—that is, are not addicted to intoxicating drinks—there are very many who do not adopt Paul's rule and keep their body under and bring it into subjection. Many are really the slaves of tobacco ; many are under bondage to tea and coffee ; many gratify their senses in other ways to the extent of becoming sensual ; and may we not say that most are controlled largely, even in their religious life, by their

likes and dislikes ? If they want to do a thing they are apt to do it if they can, and if they don't want to—duty often calls in vain.

VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

In another place the attempt has been made to show what overcoming the world means, also that one truly born of God, one who “believes unto righteousness,” will win the victory. Now the question is, are the mass of church members that we know of so victorious as to prove their divine parentage ?

If we look into business matters shall we find that they stand decidedly higher in the scale of integrity and trustworthiness than others ? The world's motto is, “Take care of number one ;” Christ's rule is, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Which is most followed ? Do business men habitually trust the honor and honesty of church members more than that of others ? Do they pay their debts better ? Are they very much less greedy for gain ? Are they less anxious for display ; less lavish in spending money on dress and equipage ? Can they more readily refuse to obey the dictates of fashion ? Theoretically those who profess religion renounce the pomps and vanities of the world and adopt the Golden Rule as their motto ; practically, we all know that they do no such thing. The Flora McFlimsseys of city and country, and the defaulters and

swindlers in business seem almost as likely to be in the church as out of it.

Now and then the world grows religious. There comes a revival—or the Lent-season sets in, then these Christians are religious too. The card-tables are put away, dancing-parties are postponed, and religious zeal becomes quite noticeable. But, alas! revivals and Lent do not last all the year. The tide of religion is soon at its ebb, and the flood of worldliness comes swirling in. Then the flood-wood is borne away and only a few are left to stand “like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in its season, and their leaves perpetually green.”

There are some who overcome the world—the many appear to be very much under its control.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

Does the Spirit bear witness with our spirits that we are born of God? Does he give us blessed assurance that we are Christ's and he ours for time and eternity? Most assuredly he does if he abides in us.

Well then do Christian people generally feel prepared for death, so that they feel no fear of what comes after death? Are they so conscious of union with Christ as to be at rest in regard to their welfare for eternity? Is it not true, that in most cases there is a felt need of a deeper change than they have yet experienced, or else a hope that they may

become so revived and so faithful to duty as to gain assurance of the divine favor? Few people probably depend upon what they have done as a ground of the divine favor, but very many seem to depend upon what they are going to do. Is there much difference? If there is, the latter is not the better trust. Satan has no better snare for souls than the hope of future repentance and faithfulness.

It is an idea that seems somewhat common, that Christians ripen for heaven before the time comes for them to die; and there are, no doubt, many cases in which this idea seems justified. But no one who is conscious of living in sin and estrangement from God, habitually, has any right to build a hope on this.

CONTINUANCE OF LIFE.

How do they hold out? "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth."

We have seen that according to the word of God those who are born of God will strive to live, and will continue to live the new life. Now, whatever we may think of "falling from grace," whether we may be Arminians or Calvinists, we shall none of us deny that in and around all the churches there is a vast deal that looks like it. Thickly all around our churches, stand those who were once rejoiced over as converts, but now have "fallen out by the way." And in the churches are many who do little less than "crucify to themselves

the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Others there are, who though still showing occasionally signs of life, are apparently nearly dead, are at the least "lukewarm," having "left their first love." These last are often self-complacent, careless, easy-going ones; they are in the church, they have been "saved," and "don't see but they are about as good as other folks;" they have no gifts for active service, if things do not go on well somebody else is to blame, not themselves; they have no responsibility for the church and cause of God; evidently they are willing to go to heaven if the tide, and the oars of the earnest ones shall carry them there, but do not expect to take much trouble for it.

Are they "saved?"—nay verily. Will they be at last? Who will tell us? Some of them may seek and find the way of righteousness. The Holy Spirit may be received as the abiding and controlling keeper of the soul. Many will live on as they are, till death comes and takes them away. On a dying bed they may drop some word of willingness to go, or of submission to what is inevitable, and friends will gather up the straws of hope, and at the funeral, the kind-hearted minister will try to say all the hopeful words he can, and they will be talked of as gone to heaven.

Let us not try to draw aside the veil that hides from us the world of the dead. Let us be hopeful as we may for those who have gone on before. But

let us not forget that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord,"—that unless we are so born of God that his life is in us controlling us, we have no promise of eternal life.

"Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure." Let us yield to the drawing of the Father, and the gentle warnings and persuasion of the Spirit, working out our own salvation, encouraged and made glad by the assurance that it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure, and praying if we can with quaint John Berridge,

"Jesus, cast a look on me!
Give me sweet simplicity,
Make me poor and lay me low,
Seeking only thee to know.

"Weanéd from my lordly self,
Weanéd from the miser's pelf,
Weanéd from the scorner's ways,
Weanéd from the lust of praise.

"All that feeds my busy pride,
Cast it ever more aside;
Bid my will to thine submit,
Lay me humbly at thy feet.

"Make me like a little child,
Of my strength and wisdom spoiled,
Seeing only in thy light,
Walking only in thy might.

“ Leaning only on thy breast,
Where a weary soul may rest ;
Feeling well the peace of God
Flowing from thy gracious blood !

“ In this posture let me live
And hosannas daily give,
In this temper let me die,
And hosannas ever cry.”

IX.

BORN OF WATER AND SPIRIT.

“To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.”

Isa. viii. 20.

ANY discussion of the subject of regeneration must, necessarily, be defective if it does not include a careful and candid exegesis of John iii : 5, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” There is no other passage in the Word of God that sustains so close and vital a relation to the subject. It is one of the solemn and emphatic utterances of Jesus in which every word was weighed. It will not do to pass over it lightly.

Nor is the study of it less necessary because there appear to be difficulties in explaining it.

The chief trouble is with the phrase “born of water.” And this is largely because important dogmas in theology have been made to depend upon the interpretation put upon it.

At a very early day,—soon after the time of the apostles, indeed,—it came to be held by very many

Christian teachers that to be “born of water” was to be baptized. We have already seen—in the essay on Ritual Regeneration—that so early as the time of Irenæus regeneration and baptism had become not only connected but confounded with each other in the thought of the church. They have, to a great extent, remained so ever since. If the opinion of very many able and learned theologians could have established baptismal-regeneration as a doctrine of the gospel, it would have been beyond controversy long ago.

Let us be glad and rejoice that we are not dependent for our knowledge of God’s will upon church fathers, of old or more recent days; but have the “living oracles,” to which we may ever go, and which, on all important points, are so plain that he who runs may read, and a wayfaring man, though not wise, need not mistake his path.

But in studying commentaries, and expositions of this text, we find that it is not ritualists and believers in baptismal-regeneration alone, who think that our Lord referred in some way to baptism when he used this phrase. There are many who stand high in denominations deemed especially evangelical who take this ground. They do not believe in baptismal-regeneration. Oh no!—but they cannot understand what Jesus meant, if he did not in some way refer to baptism.

These teachers, in order to explain the text, usually tell us that the kingdom of God, as spoken of

here, must be the same thing as “the visible church” and that as baptism is the outward and visible door into the church, so it is into the kingdom of God. This is a somewhat plausible explanation :—is it the true one ?

There are certainly difficulties about it which we may not overlook. If we adopt it, how shall we explain the words of Jesus in Luke xvii. 20, 21. “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, lo here ! or lo there ! for behold the kingdom of God is within you ?” Certainly, if baptism is the door into the church, and so, is the ceremony of naturalization into the kingdom, the coming and spread of the kingdom can be observed, and Jesus must have been mistaken.

Again,—what shall we say of such cases as Simon Magus, Ananias and Sapphira and their kind ? They were in the visible church,—were they really in the kingdom ?

And what of the man who was crucified by the side of Jesus, who showed more true faith in him than any of those who had been his chosen companions, and who received the promise of Paradise ? He could hardly be supposed to be in the church, was he therefore not in the kingdom ?

And again, is being in the kingdom equivalent to being saved, or is it not ?

If it is, and the visible church is the kingdom, then there is small hope for those who are unbaptized, and so not in the church, however holy and

Christlike they may be ; and on the other hand many are likely to be saved who are well nigh as unchrist-like as possible.

But if not, how shall we explain such passages as Mark ix. 47 ? “ And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.” Did Jesus mean to say it is better to enter into the visible church with one eye, than having two to be cast into hell ?

These are by no means all the puzzling questions that will arise under this interpretation. But before we look for more we may as well try to define

THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

Perhaps we shall not find this a very easy task.

If we were ritualists, either Romanists or high-churchmen, we should be able to do it readily ; we should then know just what the church is, and where to find it. Being neither one of these, we may find our task a hard one.

If the question were, what is a church ? the etymology of the word would tell us,—a house of the Lord. Then a meeting-house, a house set apart for the service of the Lord may be properly called a church. Also, because we have assurance that wherever Christians meet in the name of their Master he will come and abide in the midst of them, therefore a congregation of believers gathered in one place to worship God is truly a church. It is

easy enough then to see what *a* visible church may be, but *the* church—what is that?

It will not do to say that it is the great body of true believers, the body that in Heb. xii. 23, is called “The general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven,” because that body, that church is, certainly, not in any true sense visible on earth. There is no list of its membership kept this side of heaven. No man may mark its boundaries, and say who is in it, and who is not. Into it no one is initiated by any visible ceremony. Baptism is no door into it; for, beyond doubt, multitudes are in it who have never been baptized, and other multitudes have been baptized, who know nothing of its blessed privileges.

But is it the church spoken of in Eph. i. 22, 23, and Col. i. 18, which is there called the body of Christ?

Possibly some who are not ritualists will be inclined to answer affirmatively here. But let us think. Christ is not here bodily and visibly, to be the head of any sort of organization. If there be any union between him and his followers on earth corresponding to the vital union between the head of a man and his body, it must be a spiritual union, and must imply positive spiritual life in those who are connected with him as members. Now will it do to predicate this of the mass of professedly Christian people in the world? Will it do to assert it of the aggregate membership of even the churches that

lay highest claims to be called evangelical? To ask this question is to answer it. Christ speaks of fruitless branches of the vine, to which he compares himself, that will be cut off and burned, but he does not speak of amputating members of his body.

No, no, the church which is the body of Christ must be the same as "the church of the first-born." Its members are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

If we continue our search for a definition of the phrase "the visible church" we shall probably come to the conclusion that it is one of those loose expressions which are very convenient to use, but which are absolutely incapable of being defined. This one it is not easy to dispense with in the common language of the religious world; but each man uses it as pleases himself, and generally, among anti-ritualists—the idea which it represents is too vague to allow of precise statement.

Surely it will not do to say that the Kingdom of God spoken of by the Master in the text we are studying, is the same thing as the visible church.

But what then is

THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The question must not be answered hastily or carelessly; because it looks very much as though entering into the Kingdom was in the mind of Christ equivalent to being saved, and that our destiny for eternity depended upon our being in it.

The terms kingdom of God, kingdom of Christ, and kingdom of heaven, are used quite often in the New Testament and are used in that free sort of way which renders it necessary, usually, to study the connection in order to be sure of what may be meant. Thus, in Matt. viii, 11, Jesus says, "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Here the kingdom must mean heaven. But in Matt. xiii, the kingdom of heaven is compared in its growth to a mustard plant, and to leaven, and of course must be on earth. Then in Matt. iv. 17, we read that "Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; while in Matt. xi. 12, he says, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Implying that it had already come.

Again, sometimes there seems a difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, while at other times they evidently mean the same thing and are used interchangeably.

Perhaps it will help us to get at the root of the matter if we observe that each and all of these terms must be understood in a figurative sense. God and Christ have no literal kingdom in this world, and, notwithstanding the supposed proof brought forward by our premillennial brethren, we must believe never will have. God is never called a king in the Scrip-

tures until the time of David. Then all ideas of governmental power and right began to gather and crystalize around the king, and most naturally God would become in the mind of his servants the King of kings. If there had been around the writers of Scripture no earthly kings we should never have heard of the kingdom of God.

If now we study carefully the use of this term and its correlatives we shall find that many of them are designed to attribute to God personal power and glory. This is noticeably the case with their use in the Psalms. Others convey the idea of force, without seeming to include that of personality. Many passages in the New Testament would come into this class ; but the most notable example recollected is in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar as interpreted by Daniel. There the kingdom which the God of heaven would set up, and which probably no one doubts was the kingdom of Messiah, was represented by a fragment of mountain rock, unshaped by human hands, that gathered to itself size and force by accretion or interior development as it moved, until it became a mountain occupying the whole earth. There is no room here for the thought of the organization and machinery of a human kingdom ; no suggestion of a seat of government, or of officers, or even of a personal king. The mountain rock means force, and has its counterpart in that power which is felt wherever the gospel comes, that makes all of the old despotisms and organized forms of

selfish government,—government for the sake of the rulers and not of the people, crumble and tumble down. The mountain does not fill the earth yet, but who that has watched its progress during the last few years, if he cares for human well-being, can help but thank God and take courage.

This kingdom may be thought of as aggressive and militant. Its progress must be through struggles and battles, with sometimes apparent defeat, and sometimes victory. Those who belong to Jesus are soldiers in its army, though the weapons of their warfare are not carnal, and they fight not against flesh and blood, and find the arena of their battles chiefly in their own hearts. For the progress of this kingdom we pray when we say, “Thy kingdom come.” In its beneficent influence it grows like the mustard plant, becoming a sheltering tree, and spreads from heart to heart with vitalizing power as the leaven spreads in the meal. An important feature of it is exhibited in the parable of the tares of the field. The righteous and the wicked are to grow mingled in it as the wheat and tares grow together in the field of the farmer. It is this kingdom which, when the end comes and Christ shall have put down all rule and authority and power, when all enemies are put under his feet, will be given up to the Father.

There remains still another class of texts in which the dominant idea seems to be that protection

and privilege are connected with entering into the kingdom.

Of this class there is no better representative text than the one we are studying, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Here the idea of entering into the kingdom must be much the same as of becoming a citizen of the kingdom, and so becoming entitled to certain rights and privileges under it. Now it will be recollected that the people to whom Jesus preached lived under the Roman government, and had abundant opportunity to see that to be in the Roman kingdom, that is, to be a Roman citizen, was worth something. They could not help knowing that the poorest and meanest Roman citizen was entitled to, and received protection and privilege beyond even the wealthiest and noblest of those who were not Romans. When therefore the Lord spoke of entering into the kingdom, he used an illustration of great force to the people of his country and time.

Bearing this in mind, the important question would be, how may one be made a Christian free-man, a citizen of this kingdom? Jesus said, by being born of water and Spirit. Thus again we come to the question, what does it mean to be born of water? Is it to be baptized? This question must be met squarely. The words meant baptism or they meant something else. It supposes this

most emphatic declaration of Jesus, to have been strangely confused and inexplicit, to say with some that baptism is referred to in some way as a symbol of regeneration, but not expressly meant. His “verily, verily, I say unto thee,” requires of us a plain and unequivocal interpretation of what follows.

It ought to help us in getting a clear understanding of this matter to keep it in mind that the kingdom here spoken of, *is not a visible earthly kingdom.*

The king himself is not visible. He is here on the earth indeed, dwells here; but it is in the hearts of his subjects. There only has he a throne or a seat of government.

He has no viceroy or delegated head of government here. The old giant—to follow Bunyan, who hides himself in the recesses of his Roman cave, sending forth now a threatening growl, and then a piteous wail, because he cannot prevent the moving on of that stone from the mountain, or hinder the increasing light of the gospel day, is the only claimant, even for such a place.

There is no registry of the citizens of this kingdom on the earth. It comes not with observation. Its laws and principles steal into men’s hearts and produce effect upon their lives. Lookers on may see that one and another of their fellows appears to become loyal to Jesus, and this is about all they can see. True, there may be, and doubtless ought to

be a public acknowledgment of allegiance to the king, a profession of loyalty, and this by that ordinance of baptism which symbolizes so beautifully death to the old life and resurrection to the new. But we must be careful not to change what is essentially a preaching ordinance into a mystical rite, and attribute to it some peculiar "divine efficacy," nor think that any visible ceremony can be the act of naturalization into a kingdom which is itself invisible.

Protection and privilege have been spoken of as inuring to those who enter the kingdom; but neither are these visible or earthly in their character. For the present they can only be apprehended, and enjoyed by faith.

The subjects—citizens—of the kingdom are always surrounded by enemies and dangers. No matter though their foes and their battles are mostly in their own hearts, they are none the less real and important. And in these battles they are sure to be overcome and carried into captivity, if the power of the kingdom is not put forth on their side. But it will be put forth, always and everywhere, for those who are in it. Jesus Immanuel has become the captain of their salvation: the broad banner of his care will be ever over them: their watchful keeper will never slumber nor sleep. They may say with the Psalmist "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety,"—assured that "when the enemy comes in

like a flood the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard," and rouse the garrison of the soul against him. O, it is worth something, more than can be told, to one who by his falls and failures has learned to know his own weakness and danger, to hear the King say as by direct message to his soul, "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even forever more."

It is worth something too, to one who knows the burden of sin, to know that so soon as his name is registered in the roll-book of the kingdom, all his transgressions are forgiven, his soul-debts cancelled, and the robes of his soul washed clean in the blood of the Lamb.

Neither is it a small privilege, that just so soon as his citizenship is secured he has the right of entry to the presence of his Lord and may come to him always, as brother to brother, as child to father, and bring his smallest perplexity, his lightest grief, and every desire of his heart, being sure that he will be heard and helped to the utmost of infinite love and infinite power.

And then at the last, borne scatheless through death and the judgment—hid in the secret of his Lord's pavilion till the wrath is overpast, he shall be present when all eyes shall see the King in his

glory, and with him shall have a crown and a throne.

O, it is no light thing to have the protection and privileges of the kingdom of God !

If, now, the idea of a visible kingdom of God, equivalent to the visible church is abandoned, as it would seem, it must be by all who do not accept, in essence, the dogma of baptismal-regeneration ; then, the idea that “ born of water ” refers to baptism must also be abandoned, and the question remains. What is it to be

BORN OF WATER.

Plainly, if these words do not refer to baptism they must be explained as a metaphor, and water must mean something other than literal water.

To this it is objected that it is not good use of language to couple together a metaphoric, and a literal phrase as “ born of water,” and “ born of the Spirit,” are coupled in the text.

The reply to this objection is, first, The oriental use of language was always more free than strict, and allowed the use of figurative expressions everywhere and anywhere : and second, The use of the word born in the phrase is undeniably metaphoric, and if we go back to the Greek we shall see that the phrase “ born of the spirit ” is hardly so literal as it may seem. *Pneuma* means literally, a breath, wind, and its use to express spirit is really metaphoric. This seems a sufficient answer to that objection.

Again it is said, that, while Nicodemus was beyond doubt familiar with the use of literal water in religious rites, and must have known something of baptism as practiced by John and Christ's disciples, he would not have understood a metaphoric use of the word.

But if it can be shown that this would be a very natural metaphor, and its meaning so obvious as to be readily seen, that Jesus used it repeatedly and undeniably at other times, and that Nicodemus must have been familiar with its use, then of course the objection loses its force.

The metaphor is a natural one. Jesus wished to impress upon the mind of his visitor the idea that in order to become a citizen of the true kingdom of God, he must come to live a new, and radically different soul-life from his former one. His present and former life was the life of the flesh, a new and spiritual life must begin in him.

Now in his time water and air were considered the life-giving elements. Let us look abroad over the earth and we cannot fail to see that always and everywhere water is indispensable to the giving, and continuing of life. This is equally true of both animal and vegetable life. Every school-boy knows that those parts of the earth where no rain falls and no water flows, are desert. School boys may not know but intelligent men do, that in almost every instance, nothing is needed to transform the most barren desert into fertile fields, but an abundant

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and continued supply of pure water. Let there be copious and frequent rains on the desert of Sahara, or let the Nile be diverted from its course and be made to flow over it, and not one year would pass, ere "the wilderness and solitary place would be glad thereof, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Next to air, breath, *pneuma*, water is most indispensable to life, and may well be taken to represent that which gives and sustains the new life of the soul.

What is it that does this? Is it the Spirit alone? Certainly not. There is a sense in which he does it all. He has given us the Bible and all gospel influences. All Christian labors, too, which are effective, are due to him as the motive force. But, the New Testament distinguishes between these indirect influences and his direct action upon the human soul. It clearly teaches us that the truth of the gospel, borne to men's minds and made effective by human efforts, is indispensable to the salvation of souls. "By the foolishness of preaching God will save them that believe." The Corinthian Christians were "begotten" by Paul "through the gospel." The instance is yet to be found, of one truly regenerated by the direct action of the Spirit alone, without the gospel. Jesus represented the gospel and its influences by water, the direct action of the Holy Ghost by wind, breath. In this there was nothing far-fetched or hard to understand.

Again, it was precisely in this sense that Jesus used the word water in his conversation with the woman of Samaria. He said, "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." There can be no mistake in regard to the meaning of water in this passage. The water which Christ would give, is that which will originate and sustain a new life in the soul. When the Samaritan woman drank in the teachings of Christ and the influences flowing from him, she drank the water of life.

In John vii: 37-39 we read, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Now it may be said that by his explanation John makes water here mean the same as the Spirit. The obvious reply is that the thirty-ninth verse is explanatory only of the thirty-eighth. John understood Jesus to allude in the thirty-eighth

verse to the results that followed the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when each believer became himself a fountain from which streams of salvation flowed. It is clear that the explanation cannot apply to the thirty-seventh verse, because there Jesus says, if any thirst let them come—come now to me and drink.

Add now to these passages Rev. xxi: 6, “And he said unto me, It is done, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely?” and nothing more is necessary to show that Jesus used the word water to mean the gospel with all its influences, or in other words, the means of salvation.

We have now to inquire whether Nicodemus was, or from his position and circumstances ought to have been, familiar with a use of the word water similar to the one claimed.

To answer this inquiry it seems only necessary to refer to the use of the word in “the Prophets.” It will not be denied that he was familiar with the prophecies that related to Messiah’s day. The mass of the Jewish people had made them a special study, and certainly Jesus had a right to assume that his visitor knew and understood them. And even if it were claimed that the spiritual import of the prophecies may not have been understood by him, it can hardly affect our argument, because it was the constant habit of Jesus to quote, and refer to the prophecies relating to himself and the gospel

as though they were understood. The true question is whether Jesus had a fair right to use the metaphor in question in talking to the Pharisee.

Of the passages in the prophets which we are to examine, we are naturally reminded first of Isa. lv: 1, "Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, etc.," and Isa. lviii: 11, "And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." These occur to mind because the words of Jesus already quoted, John vii: 37-38, are so nearly parallel to them as to seem almost like a quotation of them.

In Isa. xxxv: 6, 7, we read, "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water, in the habitation of dragons where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes."

It will not be easy to mistake in regard to the meaning of this passage. It is a prophecy of Messiah's day—of the gospel day; and "waters," and "streams," and "springs of water," clearly represent the life-giving and life-sustaining influences of the gospel.

Isa. xii: 3, must not be passed without notice. The whole of chapters xi. and xii. are a prophecy of the reign of Immanuel, and we shall not misunderstand the words, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

But the most remarkable use of this metaphor found in the Old Testament, is in Ezek. xlvii ; 1-12. The prophet says :—Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house ; and behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward ; for the fore-front of the house stood toward the East, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then he brought me out of the way of the gate northward and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward ; and behold there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters, the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters ; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through ; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand ; and it was a river that I could not pass over ; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. And he said unto me, Son of man hast thou seen this ? Then he brought me and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into

the sea ; which being brought forth into the sea the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come shall live ; and there shall be a great multitude of fish, because the waters shall come thither ; for they shall be healed ; and everything shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi unto En-eglaim ; they shall be a place to spread forth nets ; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof shall not be healed they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed ; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary ; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat and the leaf thereof for medicine.”

Now it is believed that no one will doubt that this, also, is a prophecy of the gospel. It cannot well be explained in any other way. And then, Zech. xiv : 8, “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea : in summer and in winter shall it be ;” which is certainly spoken of the gospel day, is so nearly parallel to it, in

some points, that they both evidently refer to the same thing.

Let us study for a little, this marvelous river. We observe, 1. The origin of the river. This was in the temple. Now Christ spoke of himself as the true temple, and the literal temple was unquestionably a type of Christ. Christ was the fountain then, we may assume, from which these waters flowed.

2. The stream flowed through Jerusalem, which surrounded the temple,—and Jerusalem was a type of the true church, the bride of Christ,—and thence out into the Judean wilderness, and on into the Dead Sea. The wilderness must mean the same that it does in the quotations from Isaiah, and may well be taken to stand for the mass of unredeemed humanity.

3. The growth of this stream is not like that of other streams. It has no tributaries, and flows through a desert and yet it steadily grows wider and deeper. It evidently has a reproductive power within itself. Just so it has been with the truth and influence of the gospel ;—they have flowed on through the world growing wider and deeper as the centuries have passed by.

4. This river gives life wherever it flows. Even in the barren desert, there springs up at once all along its course a living verdure ; and soon its banks are shaded everywhere by trees—trees, too, that in their turn become life giving, for they are trees

“Whose fruit is for meat,” and whose “leaves are for medicine.” One can hardly fail to connect with this idea of the trees growing by the river, what is said in the first Psalm,—“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season : his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” God’s children are the trees, and the waters are the waters of life to them.

The sea also—the Dead Sea, in whose salt bituminous waters, nothing can live, is healed so that its waters, too, become waters of life, and swarm with fish of every kind. Only the shallow, marshy and miry places, where the life giving waters are hindered from flowing, these “are not healed but are given to salt.”

Now is the meaning of this vision of the prophet doubtful? Can this wondrous river represent anything else but the streams of gospel influences,—say gospel truth, if you will, only, in the gospel plan truth needs to be warmed and vitalized in living hearts, and become concrete in Christian lives, in order to be effective—that flowed first from the Saviour, then with a broader and deeper current from the apostles and their associates, and then on, broadening and deepening continually, as the hundreds, then thousands, and then many ten thousands who drank the waters, became themselves fountains from which the waters flowed to others?

The thoughtful reader will probably connect in

his mind, with this vision, that of John recorded in Rev. xii : 1-2, "And he showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it," the city, "and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." It will be felt that the rivers, in the two visions, must be essentially, if not identically, the same. Yet there is a difference. In the vision of the Revelator the river has no small beginning, no growth, but he sees it bursting in full volume from the throne of God and the Lamb. The difference appears to be in the time of the visions. In the first, the gospel is seen in its inception. The stream flows from one pair of lips. It flows through human, earthly channels, and grows broader and deeper as it rolls on. In the second, the small beginning is not seen, the temple is gone, Jerusalem is gone, the wilderness and sea are gone. These all belonged to preceding ages when the gospel was spreading like the leaven in the meal. Now, the full triumph of the church, and her day of glory, has come. The tabernacle of God is with men. The New Jerusalem has come down, and the bride of the Lamb dwells in the mansions prepared for her ;—dwells perpetually in the presence of her wedded husband. The river of the waters of life flows still, and along its banks grow, as in the days

gone by, the trees whose fruit is for meat and whose leaves are for medicine, but human agency has disappeared, and God and the Lamb alone are seen to be the fountain of truth and of life.

But what of the sea, the Dead Sea, into which Ezekiel's River flowed? Well, it will hardly weaken the position taken, regarding the general meaning of the passage, if this question be not answered. It is certainly a difficult one. But at the risk of its being thought fanciful, a suggestion will be made. If the waters of life mean gospel truth, issuing from lips that have been touched, as Isaiah's were, by the living coal, taken by the seraph from the altar, then, perhaps, the waters of death, of the Dead Sea in which no living thing exists, may mean the outflowings of corrupted and depraved hearts unmixed with, and unaffected by the revelation of God to man. This much we know, that the literature of the world, in all times and places, in which the influence of God's revealed truth has not been felt, has been a very cess-pool into which all foul and poisonous thoughts, all falsifications of religion, all pernicious errors, and all infidelities, have flowed, and in which they have festered from age to age. More than this, we know, or at least may hopefully believe; that the world's literature,—earth's uttered and recorded thought—is being healed by the gospel. Year by year the influence of the gospel is extending. Soon, we may hope, there will be few places where the education of the world will not be mainly

in the hands of earnest Christians, and where minds imbued with the gospel will not be found to a great extent controlling the pen and the press. Even now, if one does not seek for polluting and error-bearing literature, he will find that the great mass of the published thought of our time is more or less helpful to a true, good life. The principles of the gospel have permeated it in some degree.

Now it is submitted to the candid reader,

First—that to interpret “born of water,” as meaning baptism, is to surrender the whole text to the ritualists; for it is folly, or something worse, to say that it means baptism, and that yet one may enter the kingdom of God without baptism.

Second—That Jesus might fairly and intelligibly have used the word water to mean the saving, the life-giving influences connected with the gospel.

Third—That the interpretation harmonizes the text with the facts and the philosophy of the plan of salvation.

Fourth—That we are justified in believing it to be the true one; and that when Jesus said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” he meant that except a man receive the gospel in a humble teachable, little-child-like spirit, and so turn under its influence as to enter upon a new life; and also open his heart to the Holy Spirit so as to receive in his soul his direct, renewing power, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

But the argument is not completed yet.

The view taken shows the Saviour's words to be—what they were evidently intended to be, explanatory of what he had said before. Nicodemus had, beyond doubt, come to Jesus with the idea fixed in his mind, that as a lineal descendant of Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Israel, he was entitled to all the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom. He was not yet quite sure that Jesus was the Messiah, but thought he might be, and wished to be on good terms with him. Hence his visit and complimentary address. But when the Master met him with the words, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," he was thunder-struck. His next question shows this clearly, "How can a man be born when he is old, etc." The reply of Jesus explained the startling words by telling him first—that citizenship in his kingdom did not come by natural, but by spiritual birth. Second, that the new life which must begin in him, must grow out of the teachings of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit upon his heart.

Let us turn now to Tit. iii: 5. This passage is regarded by most expositors as very nearly parallel in meaning, to John iii: 5. The whole verse reads, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The washing of regeneration is held to be equivalent to being born of water, and the

renewing of the Holy Ghost is of course the same as being born of the Spirit. Those therefore who think "born of water" means baptism, think that the "washing of regeneration" means baptism also. If it does, then the passage may be truthfully rendered—he saved us by baptism and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Who will adopt frankly and fairly this rendering? None but pronounced believers in baptismal-regeneration. Yet many others will think "baptism is somehow alluded to" in the passage. This will not do. The phrase either means baptism, or it does not. There is nothing of the nature of an allusion in it. Let us face the question fairly and not try to creep away from our position in smoke and dust of our own raising.

"The washing of regeneration;"—these words remind us of words of the prophet Zechariah; he said, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." These words were certainly spoken of the gospel day—is it not natural to think that "the washing of regeneration," is done in the fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness? But perhaps baptism will be found in Zechariah's words also; it seems to be found in some places where we would just as little think of looking for it.

If we can see that the waters of Zechariah's fountain are the same metaphoric waters which Isaiah saw breaking out in the wilderness, and which

Ezekiel saw flowing in that marvelous river, and that these waters, always and everywhere, constitute "the bath of regeneration," then this passage instead of favoring a pernicious and fatal error, is seen to be in perfect harmony with the general teachings and spirit of the gospel.

Closely related to Tit. iii: 5, is Eph. v: 26, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it—the church, with the washing of water by the word." Here too baptism is found by all who find it in John iii: 5, and Tit. iii: 5. They would have the passage mean that Christ saves the church by baptism by the word. Now, with all deference to much learning be it said, this is simply nonsense. No living man can tell what "by the word" means, if "the washing of water," more correctly "the bath of water," means baptism. The Greek words here would be even more difficult to explain than the English. But let the bath of waters have the same metaphoric meaning that has been claimed in the other passages in question, and all is clear and forcible. "The bath of waters," and "the word," mean the same thing, and the latter phrase is explanatory of the former.

One more text claims notice in this connection. 1 John v: 6, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." "The authorities," find baptism here also—Christ's baptism. Well, by the form of this sentence, water and blood are made antithetic

to each other, and we must conclude that in John's mind, they were of equal importance. But the expression "not by water only but by water and blood," seems to indicate a fear that some might think that Christ's coming by water was the more important fact of the two. Now Jesus was baptized and the fact noted by the evangelists, but beyond the simple record of the fact, there is, it is believed, no allusion to his baptism—unless it be in this text, by an inspired writer. And yet, in the mission of Jesus, his baptism was one of the two great facts, his death being the other; and there was danger of its being regarded as the greater and more important fact of the two! Believe this who can. No, no; the fact in the life and mission of Christ which was really antithetic to his death, was his preaching—his being the fountain from which all gospel truth and soul-saving influence flowed out. The water was metaphoric water. The river that Ezekiel saw flowed out from him. "For this end was he born, and for this he came into the world that he might bear witness to the truth." He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

In the minds of some, there is a connection between this passage and the account which John gives of the flow of blood and water from the side of Jesus at the crucifixion. Perhaps there was such a connection in the mind of John; but it is not easy to see that that throws any light upon the meaning

of this passage ; though this may possibly help us to see the import of the other.

Let us now turn back to the words of Jesus ; “ Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” We have studied sufficiently, perhaps, the phrase “ born of water,” and are prepared for the proposition, that when Jesus used it, he meant that

All who would secure the benefits of his kingdom and be saved, must so receive the truth and other influences of the gospel, as to be led to turn from sin and self to holiness and God, and thus begin to live a new life.

This change, the turning unto a new and godly life, is what we call conversion. We have seen, that conversion is not the equivalent of full regeneration, that one who is converted and stops there, not going forward into a deeper and fuller experience, is almost always weak in the principal elements of Christian character, and is greatly dependent upon such outward influences as were around him at his conversion. If, now, after he comes to this state, he receives the Holy Spirit as his living, present, comforter and advocate, and guide, and keeper ; Christ will be, by the Spirit, formed in him, as Paul desired him to be formed in the Galatians ; he will be “ sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ;” he will know God as his father, and be able to say from the heart, and in reference to all things that do or may occur, “ Thy

will be done." In brief, he will be born of the Spirit.

Such a one will find the source and support of his spiritual life to be within himself, a well of water springing up into everlasting life; and thus will become, a fountain of blessed influences that will flow out to others. He will be a consecrated, living Christian. He will know what Paul meant when he said, "I am crucified together with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me?" O the deep meaning of that word "Christ liveth in me!" The merely converted, "born of water" Christian will hardly understand it.

"THOU SHALT CALL ME ISHI."

Hosea ii : 16, 19, 20.

"Oh my heart is full of laughter,
I am very, very glad,
For I have a precious treasure,
Such as princes never had.
Ishi, Ishi is the jewel—
Mine he is while ages roll;
Angels taste not of such glory,
Holy Ishi of the soul."

"How I love thee! none can utter
Of its wondrous depth and power,
Growing deeper, growing stronger,
Day by day and hour by hour.
Ishi, Ishi, night and morning
From my lips that holy name,
All the while my soul exulting,
Beareth on the self-same strain.

“ Many beauteous names thou bearest,—
 Brother, Shepherd, Friend, and King,
But they none unto my spirit
 Such divine support can bring.
Other joys are short and fleeting
 Thou and I can *never* part !
Thou art altogether lovely ;
 Ishi, Ishi of my heart.

“ Earthly loves are very lovely,
 Passing, passing fair they seem ;
But they come and go before us,
 Like some bright and happy dream.
Thou art a reality,
 From which like dreams I never wake ;
Those I cast aside as nothing,
 Ishi, Ishi, for thy sake.

“ In thy own fair realms of glory,
 In the holiest above,
There the ransomed chant the story
 Of thy wandrous matchless love.
All my longings are contented,
 All my wonderings turn to thee ;
Pole-star of my restless spirit,
 Ishi, all in all to me.

“ When the sun of life is setting,
 When the shades of evening fall,
And upon earth's fairest visions
 Cometh darkness like a pall ;
Then, O Ishi ! well beloved,
 I shall see thy glorious face
Finding in thy loving bosom
 My eternal resting place.”

X.

CHRISTIANS OF BIBLE TIMES.

“Search the Scriptures.” *John* v. 39.

IF the positions taken in the preceding essay are well taken and true, we may reasonably expect to find in the New Testament revealings of Christian experience, traces of two, more or less distinct types of Christian character, corresponding to our ideal of one “born of water,” and not yet born of the Spirit, and of one in whom the change is a completed work, who is “born of water and of the Spirit.” In searching for such traces we will begin with the chosen

COMPANIONS OF JESUS.

It is undoubtedly the common opinion among Christian people, that the apostles at least, if not others of the personal companions of Jesus were truly and fully regenerated, “born again,” when they become his associates, and to an extent, his helpers.

That they were converted persons—were changed from what they had once been, it were folly to deny. Beyond a doubt, they believed in their Master as

the Messiah, and humbly received his teachings and followed his lead. Beyond a doubt they loved him, and for his sake gave up their worldly plans and associates, and hung their hopes of the future upon him alone. They turned away from the world, so that Jesus said of them, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

But the inspired narrative of their sayings and doings clearly shows, that up to the time of the crucifixion they had not grasped at all the spiritual import of the Saviour's mission. They appear to have had no thought of his dying as the Lamb of God to make atonement for them and for the world. When he did die, they felt that all their hopes which had centered in him were blasted. Can that be true, full, saving faith in Jesus which does not take hold of him as an atoning Saviour? There was one man whose faith grasped the character of Jesus before the crucifixion; one, whose faith penetrated the dark clouds that hung around the cross; but it was the malefactor who hung by his side, not one of his chosen friends. That malefactor was evidently taught by the Spirit—was "born of the Spirit." Not so with those who "all forsook him and fled." No doubt if it had been in the purpose of God for any of them to die with Jesus, such ones would have been prepared; the Holy Spirit would have come into them, and would have awakened in them all the New Life. But God had other plans. They were to receive the Holy Ghost, but it pleased

God that before he came to them they should be left alone, without the personal presence of their Master, and should learn their weakness and their need, by their falls and sins.

But the faith of the disciples before the day of Pentecost was imperfect and weak, not only in that it failed to grasp the atonement, but in this, that it depended very much upon external circumstances, upon what they could see, and was apt to fail just when it was most needed. When Jesus was with them and they were hearing his instructions, seeing the miracles which he did, and feeling the power of his personal presence, they believed in him, trusted him, clung to him very strongly ; but when the dark days came—the days in which they saw him whom they had trusted yielding to the power of his enemies—saw him arrested and abused, and finally crucified unto death, their faith in him failed. One of the most trusted of them, is heard swearing that he does not know the man, and others, as they creep sadly away from Jerusalem, say, “ we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.” Ah ! yes, they had trusted, but now they feel that their trust was vain. So when “ the women and Peter ” came and told of the resurrection, their words seemed to the others “ like idle tales—they believed them not.” And yet Jesus had told them plainly of his death, and of its necessity, and how he should certainly rise again. He had told them, but they did not understand him, and could not fully, until

the enlightening Spirit had come. Their faith did not yet grow out of the divine power within them, but depended on what they saw at the time. Thomas was not the only unbelieving one among them.

After the day of Pentecost, these disciples exhibited quite another type of faith. And it was not merely that their faith was stronger; it was almost another sort of thing.

It grasped the full import of the life and death of Jesus. He became to them something very different from what he had been before. The atonement was understood, and at once became the central fact of the good-news which they preached.

It depended too, upon what was within them rather than upon what they saw. The man whose faith failed on the sea, and who trembled, turned pale with fear, and finally denied his Lord, in the palace of the High Priest, was apparently as calm and quiet before the multitude of the crucifiers of his Master, after the Spirit had come, as was the Lord himself when he had faced them; and when, later, we find him a prisoner bound with chains and expecting to be put to death on the morrow, we see him lying down and slumbering as sweetly as if on his own couch at home. As with Peter, so with the others,—they said, “We walk by faith not by sight.” “They endured as seeing him who is invisible.”

The love of the disciples was not the same before the Comforter came that it was afterwards.

They loved him truly before. Peter could confidently appeal to Christ's knowledge of his heart, and say "Thou knowest that I love thee." They loved him, but their love seems to have been much like ordinary, earthly, human love—largely emotional, and of course unsteady, and mixed more or less with selfishness. They loved him because he was their personal friend, was very lovable, and by his kindness to them and care for them, had drawn forth their gratitude; and also perhaps, because they expected much from him when the time came for him to set up his earthly kingdom.

Afterwards, when they had received the Holy Ghost, they loved, "because the love of God was shed abroad in them;" because their hearts and wills were sweetly harmonized with God; because, indeed, they were "born of the Spirit." One in whom the Holy Spirit abides cannot help but love—love so, that love shall be the controlling element of his life. The Spirit is love—and when

"He is the teacher, he can tell
The wonders that he learnt above;
No other Master knows so well,
'Tis Love alone can tell of Love."

The life of the disciples, while Jesus was with them was clearly a "mixed life," in which a worldly and selfish spirit not only exerted an influence but often predominated. The gospels give many instances of this. On one occasion when such a spirit

had been very manifest Jesus said to them, explicitly, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God." Now, it will hardly do to suppose, with some, that "converted" here, means only changed in views and opinions relative to the kingdom of God. The reference to a little child shows conclusively that it was their manifested spirit at which the Master's rebuke was aimed. He would have them lose their pride, ambition, worldly-mindedness, selfishness. He would teach them, that they were so far from being entitled to, and prepared for, any special privileges and honors in his kingdom, that they were not yet in it, but needed a deeper and more radical change of heart, before they could enter it. They were converted, they became like little children on the Day of Pentecost.

In this connection, some things in our Lord's farewell address and prayer, recorded in John xiii. xvii. are worthy of notice, as throwing light upon the spiritual state of the disciples at that time.

In his prayer he said—John xvii. 11, 12,—
"Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name." Now, Jesus had kept them by his personal influence, by his instructions, warnings, reproofs, by watching over them. Had he been separated from them, they would probably have gone back to the world. Peter would

have said "I go a fishing" and John and the rest would have said "We go with thee" long before they did say so. How he expected them to be kept in the future, we gather from what he had said before. "I will pray the father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.—But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."

We shall not mistake the meaning of this. The guide, the enlightener, the keeper, of the disciples henceforth is to be the Holy Spirit; and he is to come, not to dwell *with* them—as he had heretofore, in the person of Christ,—but now to dwell *in* them. To dwell in them, Ah! there is the secret of the change that came over those men. They had been guided and kept, chiefly by external influences before, now, they are to be kept by internal ones. This, Jesus himself says, will be better for them. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you." The disciples could not, probably, understand these words when they were spoken,—they could not see how any thing could be better for them than the

presence of their beloved Lord ; but afterward, when the Spirit had come, they knew that Christ himself had come back to them, not, as before, to be their companion, and teacher, and friend, merely, but now to abide in them—in the very citadel and sanctuary of their life—making their hearts his quiet home, and shedding abroad “his peace” there, and so keeping them from within, that serving him and doing his will should seem the natural and easy outflow of their hearts.

Now is it not evident that the religious level of these people was quite different before the day of Pentecost from what it was afterwards ? And more—does it not appear that before that day they stood upon essentially the same level with converted persons generally at the present day ? They certainly showed the same dependence upon external influences, the same untrustworthy faith and love and zeal, the same weakness and liability to fall under the power of temptation and sin, the same inability to understand the higher and more spiritual teachings of the Saviour, and were children instead of being men in Christ ;—not indeed “little children,” in that high good sense in which Jesus often used that term, but rather in the sense in which Paul called the Corinthians, “babes in Christ.” They were undeveloped Christians. They did not exhibit, fully and fairly, the traits which we have seen, do characterize, according to the Scriptures, those who are born of God.

It seems fair to conclude that they were “born of water,”—not yet, born of the Spirit.

We pass on now, to inquire respecting

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

We wish to know if there are any traces in the accounts given of Christians who were under the teaching of the apostles, subsequent to the day of Pentecost, of what has been called a first and second conversion, or a being “born of water” and “of the Spirit.”

It must be confessed that there is but little related in the New Testament of the experience of individuals; but a few facts and a few passages in the Acts and in the Epistles, will help us in accumulating light and proof.

1. It is worthy of notice that while conversion or repentance—these words mean nearly the same thing—and profession of faith in Christ appear always to have preceded baptism, baptism in nearly every recorded instance preceded the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Thus when the Spirit was first poured out, Peter, replying to those who “cried out, what shall we do,” said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Again it is related in Acts viii. that “When Philip was at Samaria preaching, the people believed and were baptized both men and women, and that afterwards when

the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John ; who when they were come down prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost." Also Paul, on what appears to have been his second visit to Ephesus, and after Apollos had been preaching there, "found certain disciples," and learning on inquiry that they had not received the Holy Spirit since they believed, he instructed them, they were baptized, and then he "laid his hands on them and the Holy Ghost came on them."

These cases are sufficient to show what was the common order of such events under the apostles' preaching.

The case of Cornelius was different. There the Holy Ghost fell on those who believed before baptism. But this was so done, apparently, to thoroughly convince Peter and his associates, that God had indeed opened to the Gentiles all the blessings and privileges of the gospel.

Now it may be said that all this proves nothing on the point in question, because the "gift of the Holy Spirit" as made to the churches of that day was a very different thing from anything experienced in our time.

The gift of the Holy Spirit will be discussed

more fully in another place. Now, it must suffice to say that when Peter was preaching and said as quoted, that those who believed and were baptized should receive the gift of the Spirit, he said, also, "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Then, if we are called of God, the promise is for us. And surely we of this day need it as much as any have ever needed it. If the promise is for, and to us, who may say that it is not now fulfilled?

Let us turn, now, to Rom. vii : 14-25. "For we know that the law is spiritual but I am carnal, sold under sin," etc.

This passage has been much controverted for generations. The question has been whether it describes a true Christian experience, and whether it describes Paul's experience at the time when he wrote it.

In trying to understand it, we should not forget, that the evident aim and purpose of the whole section of the epistle containing this passage, is to show the relations between the law, and believers under the gospel. In this passage, it will be observed, there is no reference to Christ or the Holy Spirit as the helper and deliverer of the soul, until we come to the 25th verse. The object appears to be, to show that the law—under the most favorable circumstances—fails to make men holy, because men are weak and sinful, and further, to introduce most

effectively the help offered by Christ through the Spirit. The despairing wail of the 24th verse, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death," comes as from one whose only out-look for salvation is to the law. The exulting shout of the 25th verse, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord " I am delivered, or there is deliverance, comes as from one who has seen and grasped the salvation of the gospel.

But there is no denying that, at the present day multitudes who bear Christ's name, and whom we must call Christians, do find in the darker shades of this passage a true picture of their soul-life ; they are carnal ; they are led captive by the law in their members ; they are in bondage sold under sin ; and it seems more than likely that a part at least of the Roman church were in the same condition ; as, there can be no doubt, the Galatian Christians were. They at least, "having begun in the spirit" were striving "to be made perfect by the flesh."

Many of the most learned and honored of the expounders of God's word have taught—and many still teach—that this state of being "carnal sold under sin," is consistent with the highest, earthly type of Christian experience ; that Paul himself never was freed from his bondage and "body of death" in this life.

But what, then, means the language of triumph which immediately follows ? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ

Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law" power, "of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law" power "of sin and death." Nothing, just nothing at all. Neither Paul nor his brethren, were free from the law of sin and death. They did not walk after the Spirit but after the flesh. They had good aspirations and desires, but how to perform that which was good they found out. The righteousness of the law was not fulfilled in them, because they did not walk after the Spirit, but they found a law that when they would do good evil was present with them.

The absurdity of such a position is sufficiently manifest. It certainly was not Paul's position.

It is confidently believed that those who find their level in the 7th of Romans have not as yet been born of the Spirit. They may have been, probably have been, converted through the truth and influences of the gospel, but have not yet received the Holy Spirit to their hearts as the abiding guest and the keeper of their souls. When they "walk without condemnation," it will be because he has come and broken their chains. And when he comes, he *will* break their chains and make them free.

In Paul's salutation to the Corinthian church, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, he uses language that is certainly suggestive of the idea that he did not consider the Christians of Corinth as all standing

upon the same spiritual plane. He writes. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, grace be unto you," etc. He would hardly have expressed himself in this way, had he not felt unable to address all the Corinthian Christians, or even the church generally, as sanctified in Christ Jesus.

In the second chapter and sixth verse he says, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect," etc. Perfect here, must be taken to mean much the same that "spiritual" does in the first verse of the next chapter. "And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal even as unto babes in Christ." It must be that with a large part of the church, the true spiritual life was undeveloped. Paul says he had begotten them through the gospel, but it can hardly be that they had so received the Holy Spirit as to be led by him and walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. They were hardly born of the Spirit.

As were the Corinthians, so and more so, were the Galatians. Most evidently they, as a body, were carnal and not spiritual. Paul's opinion of their Christian development was not a high one. His language in Gal. iv: 19, "My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," is certainly significant. He would never have written this had he felt that Christ was formed

in them. It is also worthy of notice, that in the whole of the epistle to them, he never once uses the term saints or any equivalent term.

Turn now to the Epistle to the Philippians. We shall find the tone of this quite different. Here the apostle begins, “Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons,” etc. Nobody but saints, and the officers of the church are addressed here. Did he believe that all of the Philippian Christians were sanctified in Christ Jesus? Probably not; and yet judging from the tone of the whole epistle, the church must have been one of peculiar spirituality and loveliness.

The passage in this epistle which more than any other appears to indicate the existence of two classes of Christians in the church, is the 15th and 16th verses of the third chapter, “Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.—Nevertheless whereto we have already attained let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” “As many as be perfect,”—now whatever the apostle meant by the word perfect, it is plain that he did not consider all the Philippians as perfect. So when he says, “whereto we have already attained,” he evidently has it in mind that there was a difference in their spiritual attainments.

In order, however, to understand this passage

we must study it in its connection. Beginning at the 10th verse. “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore as many as be perfect,” etc.

Now, what especially concerns our present inquiry is to know what the apostle meant by “perfect” in both the twelfth and fifteenth verses. Did he mean the same thing in both cases? This is not probable, because in the first instance he evidently deprecates the calling of himself perfect, and in the second, he seems to class himself with those who may be so. It has been suggested that we are to take the second use of perfect as ironical. But this would do violence to the spirit of the whole passage, to that of the whole epistle even. The tone of the whole epistle is one of perfect fellowship and loving trust. There is hardly a word of rebuke in it, and we certainly shall not find irony in such a passage as this. The reading, “as many as would be per-

fect" has also been suggested ; but Paul was in the habit of saying what he meant ; if he had meant that, he would have said so.

Must we not connect the first use of the term with the words, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, not as though I had already attained," and interpret it by them ? It certainly seems so, if we would find in the passage anything like a connected train of thought. But what does attaining to the resurrection mean ? Some say, the literal resurrection ; others, the resurrection of the saints, or, the "first resurrection." The objections to either interpretation are the same. They are, first—The apostle's disclaimer "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," indicates a fear that some might think of him as having attained. But surely, no one would have been in danger of thinking, however high their opinion of Paul might be, that he had been raised from the dead, or was, literally, in the resurrection state. Second, the words "if by any means I might attain," seem to put the future attaining as barely, if at all, within the bounds of possibility ; and Paul would never have spoken so of the literal resurrection, because, however much it might be an object of desire, it had been for years, with him, an object of assurance. For years, he had known that when his earthly tabernacle should be dissolved, he had "a building of God—eternal in the heavens." Third, Such an interpretation renders the passage prosaic

and formal to nearly the last degree, almost as much so, as many of the explanations of it, while it was really deep in meaning, and intense in feeling, beyond almost any thing else which even Paul wrote.

Now, when Paul would “know the power of Christ’s resurrection,” and would “attain unto the resurrection from the dead,” did he not have in mind a state of spiritual experience, in which his bodily appetites, and propensities, and even weaknesses, should be as completely conquered and controlled, or even annihilated as they will be in the resurrection state? He might easily imagine such a state; a state in which he would not be merely “crucified with Christ,” but so risen with him that his body should no longer be a clog or hindrance in either serving or enjoying God. This would be perfection indeed. For this he knew that he had been apprehended of Christ Jesus—that this was the purpose of Christ, for him, by and by; but his eager spirit could not wait; he would, if it were possible, attain, even in the present life, all the fulness of love to God and communion with him, and the perfection of service which would be realized when he should be raised in the likeness of Christ’s glorified body. This he had not “attained.” He was not perfect in this sense. But he was earnestly striving to reach this mark. Toward this goal he was pressing like a racer in the Olympian games. This was “the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

This interpretation will enable us to understand the exhortation, "Let us therefore as many as be perfect be like minded." Here, the word "perfect," evidently does not have the same high meaning as in the previous use of it. Here, we may take it in the same sense as in 1 Cor. ii : 6. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect," as the equivalent of "spiritual" in 1 Cor. iii : 1. "And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual," etc., and the meaning is, Let us therefore, as many as have received the Holy Spirit, and are conscious that he abides in us, and that Christ is so formed in us that we stand perfect and complete in him, no longer carnal or babes—but men, developed Christians, let us all have the same high standard of attainment before us, and not be satisfied, ever, with a past experience.

Doubtless there was danger that those who had entered into the rest of faith, and were filled with the Spirit, should think that they had reached the highest attainment, and should stop to rejoice rather than press onward. This, he warns them against and intimates that even if, for a time, they make this mistake, God will reveal the better way to them.

In this view of the passage the 16th verse, "Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing," becomes perfectly intelligible. There were those in the Philippian church who had not yet received the Holy Spirit—were not yet "spiritual,"

and Paul would have them feel that there was no lower standard for them than for the most advanced disciples. Whatever their attainment might be, whether high or low, there was but one rule of life for them all. They must "keep the body under and bring it into subjection," striving continually, like an athlete, to reach a higher and still higher spiritual standing, being satisfied with nothing short of the perfect and unclogged service of the resurrection state.

It is submitted now to the candid reader, that the Scriptures we have examined, do strikingly suggest, if they do not fully prove, that there was in the apostolic churches a class who had been brought under the power of the gospel, had received its truths and influences to their minds and hearts so as to have been really converted—turned from their old life, and become followers of Christ, who were yet far from being habitually led by the Spirit, and were living a mixed life, in which it was hard to tell sometimes which predominated, God or the world; and that there was another class in whom the work of change had been so completed, that they habitually walked "not after the flesh but after the spirit," and so were "spiritual," and by the Spirit had Christ formed in them the controlling element of their lives. And furthermore that, as explained, the phrase "born of water," does fitly indicate the one class; and "born of water and of the Spirit," the other.

XI.

SECOND CONVERSION.

“I in them and thou in me, that they be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” *John xvii. 23.*

Is it all a delusion ?

There are many now living who believe most fully that they have experienced a change in their hearts since their conversion, more radical in its character and more permanent and uniform in its effects than conversion itself. Are they probably all deceived ?

Many, very many of those whom all Christians honor as the righteous dead have left on record decided and clear testimony that they experienced such a change. Were they all deceived ?

These witnesses, both the dead and the living, have been connected with many different denominations, have subscribed to various creeds, and have called their experience by various names, so that there could not have been collusion among them, nor any concerted effort to sustain a theory, and yet they all have uttered their experience in essentially the same way ; and those now living are often sur-

prised and delighted to find the utterances of those who went to heaven ages ago, to be so perfectly the language of their own hearts.

Be sure there is something more than delusion, or fanaticism, or enthusiasm, in all this. There is a great fact in it which is worthy to be studied by all earnest Christians. And this we must believe, notwithstanding the fact that many who have been looked up to as leaders in Zion, who have been learned and honored theologians, have put on record their disbelief in such an experience, and their strong opposition to the doctrine which sustains it.

Far be it from any of us to undervalue sound Christian learning ; but we may well bear in mind, that by learning alone none ever find out God. The workings of the Holy Spirit in the soul must be a matter of personal experience in order to be understood. And in this case, those who have never had the experience in question, cannot be good witnesses in regard to its reality. Learned divines may think of themselves, and others may think of them, that what they do not know of the gospel is not worth knowing. But there are things which are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed only to babes. We need not ask why. Jesus did not tell us why. He only said, "Even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight." We know that learned men may be "little children" and the meekest of learners in the Spirit's school,—we know too, that they may not,—and that the opposition of the

learned is of itself, no proof that a doctrine, or an experience is not of God.

Perhaps it should be remarked here, that some who have been classed among the disbelievers in, and opponents of this experience, may properly be considered as opposing only the theories of its advocates and the terms used by them. If we can distinguish between this class and such as reject the experience itself, and regard it as a delusion, it may be well to do so, else many honored and weighty names, among the great and good, may be ranged where they do not belong.

This, however, is noticeable, that among those who have testified to having experienced this deeper change, there has been a very general feeling that they cared little for the terms used to designate it. James Brainard Taylor said, "People may call this blessing by what name they please. Faith of Assurance, Holiness, Perfect Love, Sanctification, it makes no difference to me, whether they give it a name, or no name, it continues a blessed reality, and thanks to my Heavenly Father it is my privilege to enjoy it." Still, names are convenient and rather necessary; and theories will grow up around any phenomena, whether physical or moral, which are widely known.

Mr. Boardman's very sweet book, "The Higher Christian Life," has made the terms "Second Conversion," and "The Higher Life," familiar to many, and brought them into quite general use. Because

it is familiar to most, and not at all because it is the best term, the title of this Essay has been selected.

In the Essay entitled Conversion the effort is made to show the religious level of ordinary converted persons at the present. We now wish to inquire what the change called second conversion does for its subjects. We wish to know how those who tell of it as their own experience, differ—if they differ at all—from other Christians. In pursuing this inquiry two sources of information are open to us : what these persons say of themselves ; and what others say of them. Chiefly, must we depend upon their own testimony, because although the rule “by their fruits ye shall know them,” applies to them as truly as to others, yet one who is not himself “spiritual,” will find it hard to understand the spiritual state of those who are. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

What do they say of themselves ?

Well—there are no two that tell the story just alike, but there is general uniformity in several things.

Their views of God—especially of God in Christ are new, and very different from what they have had before.

The fatherhood of God becomes very real to

them. There is something in their hearts that cries Abba Father, as never before, and yet they have such a sense of their own utter weakness, and good-fornothingness, and depravity of nature, as utterly precludes the idea of their having done anything—or ever doing anything to win God's favor. .

Now, it will probably surprise many to be told that most Christian people will show, to a close observer, when talking of their relations to God, that they rely very much upon their own works to secure and keep his favor. Nor is this any impeachment of their orthodoxy in regard to Justification by Faith. They do not depend upon any thing they have ever done. They would deny, with truth as well as emphasis, that there is, in their mind, any merit in the best of their works. And yet, when they speak of the future, they will tell of their resolutions and hopes of future faithfulness, and will show that they expect God's approbation, and a sense of his love, just proportioned to their faithfulness. They never seem to reflect that to depend for God's favor on what we are going to do, is quite as much self-dependence, and is quite as deceptive and dangerous, as to depend on what we have done. Satan has hardly a more successful wile than this.

There is hardly a feature of the change we are considering more uniform in all cases, and more marked, than this, that the deepest sense of God's protecting, brooding love, comes yoked together

with such a sense of smallness, unworthiness and nothingness, as they never knew before.

This new sense of the Fatherhood of God is connected with an equally new apprehension of Christ as their ever living and ever present Saviour. They may for many years have believed in Christ as their Saviour, and thought of him often, and gratefully, as having died for them. But now he seems to live with them, and for them, ready to help—helping them indeed—all the time, and to be so “mighty to save,” that all their fears in regard to the future are taken away.

There is also a sense of personal union with Christ that is new. They have had, from time to time, before, a consciousness of his love; he has seemed to visit them and smile sweetly upon them, but this is different. Now he has become, as it were, the husband of their souls. They know the deep meaning of the prophet’s word, “Thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name.” They feel the sweet thought thrilling through and through them that he has taken them, just as they are—with all their possessions, and all their soul-debts as well, as his very own, has taken them, “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,” to hold and keep them by his love and power forever. Yes, to hold and keep them against all the wiles of all their foes, and most of all, against themselves until their earthly work is done, and he can take them up to dwell forever with him in the

“many mansions” which his love has prepared and adorned.

This consciousness of guarding and protecting love bring with it a sense of rest that is new and very blessed. With many, this seems almost more than anything else, the distinguishing characteristic of their new experience, so that they speak of it as “resting in Jesus.” This rest does not imply a cessation of activity, or that they find less to do for God and his cause, than formerly ; but that the work is easy. They know what Jesus meant when he said, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” They rest because their wills move now in harmony with God’s will, and the old friction and resistance are gone. Many times there have been years before they “entered into rest,” in which they have constantly felt themselves in a sort of slavery. A sense of duty was goading them on to pray when they had no spirit of prayer, to believe when their hearts were filled with unbelief, to watch when to be watchful seemed impossible. Now all this is changed, and these things seem natural to them. Some time ago, a lady was speaking to another, a sister in the same church, of her sense of perfect security and perfect rest in Jesus ; her friend seemed surprised, and, with almost a look of wonder, asked, “But do you not have to watch all the time against temptation ?” The reply was, “He keeps me watching.” This is what gives rest. It is not only that he will keep us if we watch, but that he will ever keep us watching.

The ability to *Trust*—to believe, is also characteristic of this type of spiritual life. Most Christian pastors who seek to know the spiritual state of their flocks, can bear witness that everywhere Christian people are struggling with unbelief; are trying to trust, trying to believe, but are conscious all the time of failure, almost utter failure. When the Holy Spirit comes to “abide” in us, faith becomes as easy and natural as our breathing. Said one who had but lately come into the assurance of faith, “O, I never knew till now, what it is to live the life of faith! I thought before, that I knew what faith was. But O, it is so different—this full, quiet leaning upon God every moment—this trusting him without a shadow of doubt, to be and do for me all he has promised to be and do—O, it is so different from anything I ever knew before!”

Brotherly love is usually so developed in those whose experience we are studying, as to be, in a degree, a characteristic trait. Not that others do not exhibit it—but there is a difference. In these it is more Catholic, is less confined by sectarian lines, and less affected by partisan feeling. It seems to grow, more evidently, out of the recognition by one of the Spirit of Christ in the other. It enables Christians to differ earnestly and yet not love each other less. It enables them to be more patient and forbearing toward the errors, foibles and weaknesses of others. It also enables them to give or take reproof in a kind, good spirit, without bitterness.

They are able to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.

Peace—this is often spoken of as a marked feature of this experience. Many speak of the perfect peace which they find in their hearts as something wonderful. They seem to know by experience what the apostle meant when he said, “The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.” Often God’s peace is to them deeper, richer, more soul-absorbing than love or joy—is truly like a river, full, strong, ceaseless in its flow ; and is not kept, but keeps them. Trials and temptations come and go, and these are sometimes more terribly severe than they have ever before known, but they only agitate the surface of the soul, as the wind ripples the river ; down in the depths all is peace.

Consecration always marks this experience, where it is genuine. So certain is this, that it may be laid down as a rule, that if one does not exhibit the spirit of consecration, it matters little what of ecstasy or religious exaltation he may have felt, doubt will be thrown over it all ; and on the other hand if one does feel and show that his person, property, reputation, happiness and will, are wholly the Lord’s, he may be sure that the Holy Spirit is abiding in his heart, even though he cannot tell when or how he came there.

Those who tell of rest in Jesus, usually tell of a time, more or less extended, in which they con-

stantly felt that entire consecration was a duty, but as constantly found themselves unable to give up all to God. Often it would be some trifle, some most unimportant thing to which their hearts and wills would cling, and which they would seem unable to surrender to God's will. It is strange that it should be so, but it is undeniably true that very many, while they have been active workers and leading members in the various churches, have been consciously unable to utter from the heart, in reference to all things, the prayer, "Thy will be done." And when the time has come, in which their wills have sprung up to meet and grasp all God's will in perfect and glad harmony—when they have been able, not in one thing only, but in everything, and not only once in a while, but always to choose all God's will, whatever of labor, of sacrifice, of humiliation, of disappointment, of pain or of death it might bring to them—it has been a very great change. This they have realized. They have borne testimony through sharp and long continued trials and crosses, such as few have to bear, that their wills have never once wavered, nor ceased to choose all God's will.

Perhaps one or two sketches of personal experience may not be out of place here. The following was published some years ago in one of our religious newspapers, and is the experience of a pastor who is still living and bearing testimony to the great salvation.

MY BONDAGE.

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members.” Rom. vii: 23.

“Nearly twenty years ago, one evening when passing from my room in the seminary, where I was then studying, to the boarding hall, a dear brother, now many years in Heaven, passed his arm affectionately through mine, and inquired of my spiritual welfare and progress.

“After a short conversation, he placed in my hands a little book, ‘Mahan on Christian Perfection,’ with the request that I would carefully and prayerfully read it. I did as requested; and before its perusal was finished became profoundly convinced that whether the philosophy of the writer was wholly correct, and his choice of terms judicious or not, one thing was sure, there was attainable for the Christian a ‘higher life,’ a deeper experience than had yet been mine.

“I saw very clearly that I was not entirely consecrated to God, was not wholly set apart to his service, and that my will was by no means lost in his. I saw too, not only the reasonableness of God’s claim upon me for entire consecration, but that such consecration was not more a reasonable duty than a promised gospel blessing. I came at once ‘under conviction.’

“And now as I write, I feel a strong desire to pass over about eighteen years of my life with the single remark that I remained ‘under conviction’ all the time. But the thought that possibly some one may be benefited thereby, impels me to relate a few recollections of my life and experience during that time.

“It was a matter of course, perhaps, that one of the first questions arising in my mind should be, how am I to attain this blessed state? In seeking the answer to this question, I naturally inquired—how have others attained it? This led me to read almost everything in the way of religious biography, and of books which professed to guide those who were seeking a closer walk with God within my reach. I read the Bible too, carefully, prayerfully.

“Perhaps I gained all the light that I was prepared to follow and improve; but it seems to me now, that some of the impressions made upon my mind were a hindrance, rather than a help to me. Thus, I came early to think that most, if not all who had ever attained this state, had been more than ordinarily faithful and devoted Christians before such attainment; and had been very earnest and persevering in seeking it; and this idea, associated as it was in my mind with a deep sense of my own weakness and unfaithfulness, was at times a source of very great discouragement to me. Others, it seemed to me, might be faithful and successful seekers for this, but as for me, let me resolve ever

so strongly to pray, and labor, and watch, and deny myself, my prayers and labor would soon become formal, and then be neglected in a measure, my watchfulness would fail before I knew it, and my self-denials become a wearisome and irksome burden to me.

“O ! a hundred times, I suppose, I have looked back over my pathway, all strewn as it was with broken resolutions, shattered hopes and withered aspirations, and felt, with a deep heart-sickness that I cannot express, that I could not be faithful—that I was truly the captive, the fettered slave of my carnal weakness and depravity. Often in those days would the thought come over me—this very blessing which others have faithfully sought and found, I need to make me faithful, else I shall never be so. Now, I know this to be true, and I believe that then it was a suggestion of the Holy Spirit—a whisper of the voice behind me saying, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it.’

“There was another obstacle in my way. I could not earnestly and hopefully seek the blessing I desired, because I was almost always conscious of an unwillingness to yield up my will in everything, to submit all my purposes, plans, hopes, habits and indulgences, to God. This unwillingness would, of course, destroy all my confidence in prayer. How could I pray for the Holy Spirit, when I knew that I was not ready to be led by him ? How could I pray to be sanctified wholly, to be made a living-

sacrifice, when I was conscious that my heart recoiled from the altar? There were, it is true, times, many times—seasons of revival—scattered along through those years, when I seemed, to myself, to give up all for God and to him. But always, if I dreamed for a little time, that my will was lost in God's and that I had gained the prize, some test question or duty, would be brought before me, and I would soon discover that the 'law in my members' was still a living power, and that I was captive still.

"Some time in the fall of 1854, I think it was, the question of submission to God's will came up very distinctly before my mind. I had been, for some little time, more than usually revived in my religious life, had been praying, and laboring among my people, with more than usual zeal and earnestness, but had been much assailed by temptation and often overcome, until I seemed wearied, somewhat, with the struggle, when, one day while alone in my study, the whole subject of consecration to God seemed to come up before me. It was almost as if the question had been put to me audibly,—was I willing, then and there, to give up all and take Jesus for my Master in everything,—would I be, henceforth, guided in every act and plan of my life by his will? But my poor rebellious heart drew back, I felt that I was not willing. In a moment my soul was dark—dark as night. I was almost frightened. I fell upon my knees, but I could not

pray. Every word seemed to die ere it came to my lips. I could only say 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

"Months, yes, years, rolled away before that cloud was once lifted from my spirit. My heart ached very often in view of the decision I had made, and yet I seemed to have no power to reverse it. I continued steadily preaching and, in a sort of treadmill way, going the round of my pastoral duties. Somehow I dared not, could not stop. A necessity seemed laid upon me, and a woe, if I did not preach the gospel. At times, during those weary years, I was terribly tempted to unbelief. I was tempted to doubt my own conversion, to doubt that of others, to doubt, indeed, if experimental religion were not all a delusion and the gospel false. Arguments did me no good, my soul seemed drifting, hopelessly out on the dark, starless, shoreless, ocean of infidelity. I recoiled from it, and time and again said, in my heart, I will cling to the Bible and be deceived rather than give it up and be afloat upon those waters of death. These seasons of unbelief did not usually last long, but they were terrible.

THE CHAINS BROKEN.

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."
Rom. viii: 2.

"The winter and spring of 1857-8, will be long remembered as a time of general religious awaken-

ing. Very many remember it as the time when they learned to know Jesus. It was to me as the year of Jubilee. During the fall and winter, God's Spirit was very graciously poured out in our town. I felt the power of the revival, and rejoiced in it, though not in so great a measure as at some former times. The dark cloud, of which I have spoken, was over me still and I had come to doubt much if it would ever pass away in this world. Still, when I now look back upon those days, I can see that I was becoming more truly and deeply humbled, more emptied of self and more ready to give up my will to God than ever before.

"In January, 1858, some rather severe trials were appointed to me, trials which tested my willingness to say "Thy will, not mine, be done." I believe that more fully than at any former period, I was enabled to say it, and choose God's will as mine.

"Early in February, I do not remember the day nor any attending events, but I well remember the fact. I seemed to wake up, as from a dream. A new sensation seemed to fill me, to permeate my whole being. It was something I had never felt before. It was not exactly joy. It was not as exciting as religious joys had been before. It was peace, deep, calm, perfect peace. It was

"The sacred awe that dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love."

"It was light, an atmosphere of light in which

my soul seemed bathed, and which seemed to penetrate body and soul alike.

“One of the first mental exercises, which occurred after this waking up, as I recollect it, was, that the question which I had answered, years before, in the negative, now came back to me even more strikingly than before. It was as though I heard an audible voice say, ‘Are you willing, now to take God as your master in everything? Are you willing now to take his will as yours without a question and without the least reserve? Are you quite willing that he shall appoint all your future life, and send you crosses and afflictions, blasting your earthly hopes and joys, just as he shall see fit?’ I remember thinking, I will examine myself, I will not answer hastily. But immediately the cry seemed to come welling up, as from the depths of my heart, O, not willing!—that is not quite the word, but I am glad, so glad that he will be my master, every moment, in everything. How could I ever have hesitated, even for one moment, to choose his will for mine? How could I so distrust his love and wisdom? All the fears that I had had of the trials or crosses which he might send me were gone, utterly gone. I could realize now, for the first time, that ‘perfect love casteth out fear.’

“This, to me, was a new experience, different, certainly different from my conversion and from any thing I had ever felt before. I am not anxious as to what it shall be called, or whether it be named at

all. I only care to tell, as plainly as I can, what God has done for my soul. I would bear a testimony for him. I feel a debt of love to him resting upon me which eternity will not be long enough to pay. I would at least acknowledge the debt.

“But the question will be asked, perhaps, ‘Does your experience continue what it was at first?’ I reply, yes, and no, I have not always felt during the months and years that have passed, I do not now feel all the overflowing sweetness and tenderness of the first few days. Sometimes I have been ‘in heaviness through manifold temptations.’ Trials, severe and bitter, have been appointed me. But I do feel that I am as fully the Lord’s, that my whole spirit and soul and body, are set apart to him, as a ‘living sacrifice,’ as fully as then; that there has never been a time since then, when I wished to take my hand out of the hand of Jesus; I certainly do not wish to do so now.

“O! ‘I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,’ there is deliverance, and rest in Jesus, even for one so weak as I.”

It will be but natural and reasonable if the question be asked, in this connection, what is the character, as Christian workers, of those who profess to have this experience? The Saviour’s rule, “By their fruits ye shall know them,” must be applied here, as everywhere else in Zion. An experience that does not exert a controlling influence over one’s

every day life, is not to be relied upon, no matter how much of ecstasy there may have been in it, nor how remarkable in other respects it may have been.

Still, it is a difficult question to answer in any general way. If it be claimed that as a rule they are more faithful than others, this will provoke a comparison of individuals, such as is never desirable. The true way would be, to compare the life that follows this change in any person, with the same person's life before the change. The observation of the writer gives him the confident opinion, that in nearly every case, where the change is genuine, there will be found a great increase of Christian activity. And this, notwithstanding many of those who profess the change, have been good workers before. In those who have not been active, the change will be very marked. One such case may be briefly sketched.

A. B., was a few years ago, living about two miles, more or less, from the church of which he was a member. He was not far from thirty years of age. He used to come to meeting on Lord's day once in a while, to prayer-meetings and other appointments of the church almost never. He was a pleasant, well disposed man, a good neighbor, and doing nothing noticeably bad, was just one of those who count upon the church roll, and not much more.

In the revival winter of 1857-8, he was much awakened. Soon after God visited him in affliction,

taking away, after a protracted and distressing illness, his beloved wife. This trial was sanctified to him, and soon he was very earnestly reaching out after God, and longing to know the fulness of his love. Now followed a time of most painful darkness and mental distress. At times he seemed in agony. It was not the agony of fear,—but God had made him feel that he could not live without his loving favor, and he saw himself such a sinner, and so utterly weak and worthless, that he had almost no hope of God's favor. Days and weeks went by and the darkness still continued. He seemed to himself to gain nothing—and yet, one after another, the idols of his heart were given up, not in a bargain with God, but in submission to his will. About the last, and almost the severest struggle was over tobacco. That, too, went; he seemed emptied of self, and to have given up all, and yet there was no light. He was discouraged—crushed in spirit. A few hours later God seemed to take him, like a little child, right up into his arms. He could rest on the bosom of Jesus. “The peace of God that passeth all understanding” filled him—and kept him. He became very happy, and through all the years since has been a loving, trustful disciple.

But, how about his working? Well,—first, he could not live contentedly without prayer meetings; and being much away from home, and in places where there were none, he would start them himself, persuading others to come in. He could not get

along without talking about Jesus, and few if any were near him long without finding out where his heart was, and feeling the power of his faith. His pastor had reason to know that he was a generous, even bountiful giver, for all good objects. He could not keep out of the Sunday school now, and in a few months was its superintendent,—in a few more, the school was greatly increased in interest and power. After a time he removed to a new home, where he was a stranger in a large church containing probably more than ordinary culture and talent; he was not learned nor particularly talented, but he loved Jesus. Soon he was invited to be teacher of a Bible class of young men—there were three or four in the class. A year or so later it had grown to number about thirty,—several had been converted and others were seeking to know Christ. He has been usually in feeble health, and has had exhausting business cares and labors, which would have excused most Christian professors from special labor in the church; but he loves to labor for Jesus.

Now tell us, brother pastors, you who know the work to be done and how church members generally are doing it, tell us, would it not be a great and blessed change if all the Lord's people, according to their measure, were filled with the Spirit, as was this brother? Suppose we try seeking, for them, the inspiring quickening power of an indwelling Christ, rather than to goad them on to duty, as we are commonly doing.

But, what relation has this “higher life” to regeneration? Is one who is truly born of the Spirit in this state? It is believed that regeneration does properly include this change, because,

1. *The Bible portrait of one born of God, is as high toned as any true picture of the higher life can be.*

The trouble is, we have been so long accustomed to regard regeneration as but a synonym for conversion, and so to attach a low meaning to it, that it is hard to grasp its full significance. Have we not thus made void the word of God by our traditions? If we think of it carefully we must perceive that one truly born of God by spiritual generation, must in the nature of things, be a spiritual and holy man. It must be, that if the Spirit of God abides in one, he will so influence the heart and will, as to practically rule the life. This must be what John meant when he said, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not,” and, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” We are not to take it, that he asserts the absolute sinlessness of all who are born of God, but only the general principle that one who is “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” will do good works, and not wicked ones; that one who has become a true child of God, will so partake of his Father’s nature and Spirit, as to have harmony of will and purpose with him, and so cannot knowingly transgress or neglect his

Father's will. Evidently, with John, being born of God meant something.

Paul said, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." Now is it not better to follow John and Paul, and believe that one who is truly regenerate—born of God, will be a practically, holy, and truly good man ; as good as it can be justly claimed those are, who are in the "higher life?"

2. *The doctrine of regeneration as expounded by such men as Edwards and Doddridge, did bring people into the same spiritual state that is now called the "higher life."*

Doddridge, speaking of his intimate friend Lady Huntington says, "she has God dwelling in her, and she is ever bearing her testimony to the present salvation he has given us, and to the fountain of living waters which she feels springing up in her soul ; so that she knows the divine original of the promises before the performance of them to her, as she knows God to be her Creator by the life he has given her."

In his "Practical Discourses on Regeneration," p. 73, Doddridge puts into the mouth of a regenerate man such words as these, "Ignorant as I am, I shall be taught and instructed by him, that great prophet whom God sent into the world ; by him who is incarnate wisdom as well as incarnate love ; whose words resound in the gospel, and whose Spirit seals the instructions of his word. Guilty as

I am my crimes shall be expiated for there is redemption in his blood ; even the forgiveness of sins ; there is an everlasting righteousness that he has introduced ; and O, how richly will it adorn my soul ! This pollution of mine shall not forever exclude me from a comfortable intercourse with the pure majesty of heaven ; for Christ is come to be my sanctification ; and he can cleanse me by his Spirit and transform me into that divine delightful image which I have lost. Victorious Lord, how easily canst thou redeem me from that state of servitude in which I have been kept so long complaining ! How easily and how powerfully canst thou vindicate me into *the glorious liberty of the children of God* ! Blessed Jesus thou art my light and my strength, my hope and my joy ! Thou art just such a Saviour as my necessity requires ; thou fillest up all my wants and all my wishes ; thou art *all in all* to me ! I would not be ignorant of thee for ten thousand worlds. I would not live a day, nor an hour, without recollecting who and what thou art, and maintaining that intercourse with thee which is the life of my soul."

Edwards in his account of the great revival at Northampton and elsewhere, says of the converts, "The joy that many of them speak of as that to which none is to be paralleled, is that which they find when they are lowest in the dust, emptied most of themselves and as it were, annihilating themselves before God ; when they are nothing and God is all ;

when they see their own unworthiness, depending not at all upon themselves but alone on Christ, and ascribing all glory to God ; then their souls are most in the enjoyment of satisfying rest ; excepting that at such times they apprehend themselves not to be sufficiently self-abased ; for then of all times do they long to be lower. Some speak of the exquisite sweetness and rest of soul that is to be found in the exercise of a spirit of resignation to God, and humble submission to his will."

Now this language will be recognized by all who know what "full salvation" is, as the language of their own hearts. They know that Jesus can bring "them into the glorious liberty of the children of God." To them he is "light, strength, hope, joy ;" "he fills all their wants, all their wishes." They are always "happiest when lowest in the dust and most emptied of themselves." They know the "sweetness and rest of soul which is found in resignation to God and humble submission to his will." They are "nothing and God is all in all." These are almost pet phrases with them—words that are always on their lips.

Evidently the standard of Christian attainment was as high in the minds of Doddridge and Edwards, and those who thought with them, as in the minds of any who believe in the "higher life."

Nor so far as the writer has learned, was there anything like instantaneous regeneration thought of by these men. They do not speak of the change as

wrought by “a miraculous touch of the divine hand.” Regeneration was to them the generation by God, of a true Christian character and life in the disciple.

3. *When one comes into the “higher life” it is an almost invariable rule that he feels himself to be but a little child, and just ready to begin to learn and to grow.*

It is one of the saddest things about the state of a great many converted persons, that they do not “grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.” Very often they look back over twenty, thirty, even forty years and feel that the first few weeks after their conversion was the best time they have ever seen ; and so far as appears they are not stronger to work, or to suffer for God than they were in those first days.

But when one, after years spent in this way, comes to “know Jesus as a full Saviour,” there is an immediate change ; there is anxiety to learn, and there is growth in knowledge ; there is hunger for the bread, and thirst for the water of life ; and eating and drinking, there is growth in strength and grace.

4. *Regeneration, as we have already seen, is the change that fits a sinner for the society of God and the holy in heaven ; the Bible doctrine is that one born of God is saved—has eternal life ; but there is nothing in the experience of the “higher life,” which does not appear essential, indispensable even, to fitness for God’s presence.*

One can hardly be looked upon as prepared to die, who is consciously devoted to self more than to God ; who knows that his will is not in harmony with God's will ; whose heart-treasure is chiefly on the earth ; whose faith in Christ does not give him rest of soul ; and whose love does not take away all fear.

These reasons, taken in connection with what we have learned from the Scriptures examined, seem sufficient to warrant us in saying, that the experience which we call Second Conversion is included in true and full regeneration, and is equivalent to being born of the Spirit.

This conclusion may be startling to many. It may be pronounced uncharitable and harsh. It may seem to throw overboard, as lost, many very good Christian people, both of the living and dead.

But it may not be really so bad as it seems. It does not make the spiritual prospects of the mass of those who are consciously not wholly the Lord's any more uncertain than they themselves feel them to be. If we go around among the church members that we know, and ask each one if he feels now, this day, ready to die, and without fear if death should come ; we should get few affirmative answers. The ordinary Christian hope is, that fitness for heaven will come, by and by, before death comes.

Again, among those who seem to be really converted there is very often something which is called

ripening for heaven, which is really equivalent to this second change.

And again, there may be many who are really subdued unto God, and have a faith in Jesus which is full, and saving, who are yet hindered by their theological views from taking the blessing which is already at the very door of their hearts.

In truth, we are not deciding upon any case; only God can do that, and it seems better to be thought harsh and uncharitable than “to sew pillows in arm-holes,” and cry peace, peace, where God has not spoken peace.

The following sketch, furnished on request by a friend, will help to illustrate the experience we are studying.

“Go to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.”

“My early childhood did not pass without religious impressions. My mother loved God; and some of my earliest recollections, are of times when she used to take me with her, to her closet, for prayer. I had also an older sister who strove to lead those with whom she associated to love, obey, and trust the Master to whom she had consecrated her life. I well remember the earnestness with which, when I was a mere child, she used to plead with me to give my heart to the Saviour. And many times in my girlish days I felt that I ought to be a Christian, and that I would give myself to God.

“At this time, however, my ideas of God, and of a religious life, were confused and very untrue. I thought of God with awe and dread; I feared to disobey him lest he should visit me with judgments, and the thought of everlasting punishment was a source of torment to me. A consistent Christian life, I supposed, must necessarily be one of gloom and sadness; I thought it ought to be made up of fasting and prayer, of self-denial and cross-bearing, and the rejection of all that was beautiful and desirable in life. I was convinced that I ought to be a Christian, yet I shrank from such a life as a Christian’s seemed; and by and by, my religious impressions wore away; and I became wild, wayward, and almost reckless, in regard to my soul’s salvation.

“Now, it seems very strange to me, that I ever imbibed such distorted and untrue views of a godly life. My mother, and the sister I have mentioned, were exceedingly sweet-spirited persons, and their daily life spoke of joyful communion with God, and of strength received from on high

“In the year 1852, God was pleased to visit the little village in which I resided with a shower of divine grace. Meetings were held from evening to evening; at first I did not attend, but after a time, partly out of curiosity, and partly to please a friend, I went. The sermon that evening was on the reasonableness of religion. God’s claims upon all his creatures were presented in such a lucid manner, that I became convinced that it was just, right and

desirable, that all should become his subjects, his children. I saw in some degree the sinfulness of my hard, stubborn and rebellious heart. After the sermon all in the house were requested to kneel in silent prayer. I never shall forget the deep impression that was made upon my mind by the solemn death-like stillness that prevailed while all were thus bowed before God. The next day was Sunday,—I attended meeting all day, listening attentively, even anxiously, to the word of God, yet was undecided. In the evening the house was crowded ; all my associates and acquaintances were present ; an opportunity was given for those who were seeking God and desired the prayers of his children to take front seats,—I could not go—pride rebelled against it, it seemed too humiliating. The next day was passed in deep distress of mind, yet I was still anxious to conceal my feelings from all my friends. In the evening God spoke to me, by his servant, these words : ‘ For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.’ I saw now that if I would be a Christian, I must be decided. When an opportunity was given for the anxious to go forward and tell their desires, I hastened to embrace it, and spoke of my resolution to seek God until I found him, and to devote my life to his service.

The next evening I went to the meeting with my

heart full of love, and of joy. I had found Jesus, the friend of sinners, and found him my friend, my Saviour, and I longed to tell all my associates, everybody indeed, about it. How precious Jesus seemed, and how near to me ! It was wonderful. Could I ever grow cold or indifferent ; could I ever backslide and wound the Saviour, my Saviour, afresh ? O, no, never, never ! I would do every duty, bear every cross, live at his feet and not wander as I knew others had done. Alas, how little I knew of my own weakness, of my inability to keep myself doing all these things !

“ I do not remember how long I continued in this state of mind. A decline in spirituality usually comes, I suppose so stealthily that we are not aware of its approach. I did not realize my wanderings till I was far away. I think I was as punctual in attendance at all the meetings of the church, and on all the outward observances and duties of the Christian as church members usually are, perhaps more so than some, for church-going had long been a fixed habit with me. I used to enjoy some sweet refreshing visits of the Holy Spirit, when my soul would be full of joy, and aspirations after a higher and better life would be felt. Then again I would lose the Saviour’s presence, and his yoke would become heavy and the cross hard to bear ; my sky would become all dark. My life was one of ups and downs ; it was a constant warfare, often a painful struggle. I was divided in my affections between

religion and the world ; half-hearted in my attachment to Christ ; and troubled with restless cravings for questionable, if not forbidden pleasures. I had too much principle to forsake religious duties, and too little love to submit easily to the sacrifices duty required. Some six years after I united with the church I found myself so far backslidden from God, that I had ceased to think much of my Saviour or of my relations to him ; and yet a knowledge of my state did not trouble me much, for I flattered myself that most of the church were in the same condition.

“About this time in a conversation with my mother on the subject of religion, I dropped a careless remark which revealed to her the state of my mind, and sent sadness and pain to her heart. She sought her refuge, and with tears and entreaties, carried my case before him who is able to save. Soon after she sent me a letter, dictated as I believe by the Holy Spirit, for it went straight to my heart and did its work. I was aroused and became troubled with a sense of my condition. The Holy Spirit was now being poured out again in our village. Meetings were being held from day to day ; I attended them, and my heart was opened to receive the word of God.

“Now there followed for many weeks a season of deep darkness, and even agony of soul. My mind was full of most painful questionings. Was I ever converted ? Did I ever truly love God ? Were

there any Christians who did love him with the whole heart? Was there any reality in religion? Was there a God? and had he power to control the lives of his children? All this time I was reading my Bible carefully and praying for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, that I might know what God required of me—what it was to be a Bible Christian. Soon I saw, as I had never seen before, what a great thing it is to be a Christian. I saw how exceeding broad God's commands are, and that he requires implicit obedience. I saw that if I would be accepted by him I must be his, wholly his, without reserve, now and forever. Then the question arose, 'are you willing to make this consecration of yourself to God?' I hesitated—the cross seemed great, I thought my life would be one of slavery, of painful self-denial; I should be circumscribed in everything. Could I go to God for counsel and follow his will in regard to my dress, my reading, my associates; in fact in regard to everything? Must I give up all my own plans—however dearly cherished, and seek and follow God's plan instead? must my will be nothing, henceforth and forever, and God's will all in all? Then the thought would come, how circumspect I must be in all my deportment; all my words and actions must glorify God, and I must 'be instant in season and out of season,' to confess all that the Lord had done for me, before the church and the world; and this I felt would be a great trial. It seemed to me at times

that the Lord was requiring of me more than I had power to give ; and yet my Bible and my reason told me that it was no more than was just and right, that it was indeed the only true way to live.

“ Weeks passed away while I was in this state, during which all these questions, and many more, were being brought in all their bearings before my mind. They were weeks of darkness, in which God hid his face from me, and I was made to feel my utter helplessness, my unworthiness, my nothingness, as never before. I was, at this time, under the pastorate of one who had found the better way, the way of peace, and was anxious that his flock should find it. He held up Jesus ‘as the way, the truth, and the life.’ He used to say, Are you willing to consecrate yourself and all you have to God—to be laid upon the altar a living sacrifice ? Then go to Jesus, go like a little child, and just as you are, go and tell him all about your stubborn will, your hard, cold heart, all about yourself, and yield all up to him. Let him teach you and guide you. Trust him that he will do for you all he has promised to do, trust him not because you are in the least worthy, but just because he has promised. Do not dishonor him by doubting his word. There is efficacy in his blood, it can cleanse from all sin.’

“ At last, I was enabled to say, yes I will go,—Jesus I will, I do, come to thee.

“Just as I am,—without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd’st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God I come!”

“Very soon, from my inmost heart I could say,
I can come.

‘Just as I am—for love unknown
Has broken every barrier down,
Now to be thine, yea thine alone,
O, Lamb of God, I come!’

“For some time after this consecration was made I experienced no particular change in my feelings; only, I had a deep inward sense of not being my own, that I was the Lord’s now; and a feeling of rest, and patient waiting. After a little, peace came, peace like a river, deep, quiet, full, indescribable, God’s peace, and with it an abiding sense of his presence. Still later, love and joy seemed to come bubbling, gushing up in my heart till it was full, unutterably full. It was not the ecstatic joy that I had felt at my conversion, but I seemed filled with God, and with a sacred awe, and a very heaven of deep, silent love. At times the effect was almost overpowering; it seemed to me that my bodily frame could scarcely bear more.

Still, I was not satisfied. I felt that I was but a babe in Christ; that I had but just come into a condition to be a disciple, a learner in Christ’s school. O how gladly I received instruction! My

desire for it, for a deeper knowledge of God was like hunger and thirst. God's wisdom, power, and love seemed to me like an ocean in which I might bathe, ever bathe and find new delight, fresh joy continually.

“Now, when I write, a number of years have passed since the blessed time I have spoken of. During all those years Jesus has been my most intimate and familiar friend. My joy has ebbed and flowed, but trust in God, and peace in him have been habitual. I have not been without trials, and temptations, and sadness; I do not expect to be in this world,—but I can testify from my experience that God is able to keep, that his grace is sufficient, that with every temptation there is a way of escape, that his strength is made perfect in weakness.

“Yes, I have found Jesus an ever present, ever faithful, all sufficient friend. And still my cry is,

‘Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee,
Even though it be a cross—that raiseth me.’”

The following taken from the *Religious Herald*, is entitled.

RENEWED CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

“We take the following letter from the *Western Recorder*, written by a lovely Christian woman, formerly a resident of our city, believing that it may cause some doubting disciples, of which there are many among us, to seek that assurance of faith which has brought so much joy and comfort to our beloved sister:

“I have especial reasons to thank God for the meetings held in our church. You know I have always felt insecure, unsettled in my religious life. I tried to do my duty. I believed in God. But so often when others spoke of realizing that Christ was their personal Saviour I felt that they had something which I had not. I tried to tell you, but you had so much faith in me that you could not believe me. I tried to tell my pastor here, but he thought the same and suggested promises upon which I could not lay hold. So I stumbled on, *not knowing Jesus*. Do not turn away any more poor doubting souls with the vague counsel, ‘O, we all have our doubts at times ; it will come all right again.’ Mr. P.’s plain words set me to thinking, and I finally settled my status. I was like Nicodemus and Cornelius. They worshiped God. They prayed. They tried to do right, yet Christ said to the one, ‘Ye must be born again,’ and Peter was sent to the other in order that he might receive the Spirit.

“I had lost sight of Christ, When I heard skeptics doubt the divinity of Christ, I was conscious of speculating myself. I did not have a belief down in my heart that could not be shaken, as I knew I had that there was a God.

“I went one evening after service to Mr. P. He did not know me as you and others did, and could be candid. He looked at me and said slowly : ‘The safety of a soul may not be trifled with. No one can say that Jesus is the Christ unless the Father

giveth it him, but when he receives that gift you might ask a man roused from midnight sleep, and he would tell you yes !' How do you think I felt ? He suggested that I should openly come forward for prayers among the inquirers. I told him I feared that would be a sin, as there were persons and skeptics there who would say, What is your religion worth if it will not keep and support those who profess to be Christians ? He simply said : ' You know not what work the Lord has for you to do. You know not how many may be led to examine their title, when they see that even you are not sure.

"I did not know what to do, but walked into the church. It was nearly dark, and the church was empty. I went to the front, and all alone fell upon my knees and prayed for *light*. I could not say anything but 'light—light to see Jesus.' I was suddenly roused by the voice of the minister opening the night service. The house had been lighted and had filled with people while I had been all the while utterly unconscious. I took my seat in the front pew appropriated to inquirers, and I continued to occupy that seat from Tuesday to Saturday morning. I determined to find out if possible what I needed, and despite of my own mortification and the protest of my dearest Christian friends that I was denying Christ, I continued to make that my place in the house of God. My soul was in deep trouble.

"On Friday night a dear friend said to me,

‘Do you believe that Jesus was an impostor?’ The question startled me. I trembled. ‘Jesus an *impostor!*’ O no! no! a thousand times no! I could not get rid of the horror. ‘*Impostor*’ seemed ringing in my ears. I felt that my want of full belief in him was a terrible sin.

“At the Saturday morning meeting the minister read several passages of Scripture describing the tests by which we might *know* whether we were truly Christians. Light broke into my soul. My sad heart was comforted. Jesus gave me the assurance I longed for, that he is my own Saviour. The meeting was a sweet and precious one to me. And now I would not take the world for the strength and faith I have at last. If dark days come, this will be a landmark to me: ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’”

“I believe I was converted before when in my early youth I united with the church. But there is a reality, a life in religion which I never knew before. * * * Some fifteen or twenty of the members of the church have in a similar way humbled themselves, sought as wanderers the prayers of God’s saints and obtained this blessing of assurance through faith in Jesus. Some say they never before knew the peace and joy of heart-trust in Christ, and doubt that they were ever before converted. Some tell me that this movement of professing Christians has unsettled the faith of half the church, but I feel like leaving all consequences in the hands of the Lord.

“ A week after I received the following stanzas expressing the peace and joy of conscious trust in Jesus :

‘ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.’

“ Nobody knows what I have in my heart !
A fountain of rapturous joys ;
A faith that exultingly bears me aloft
Over earth and its glittering toys.

“ Nobody knows what I have in my heart !
The Presence from over the ark,
A glory that turns every bitter to sweet,
An illuming that scatters the dark.

“ Nobody knows what I have in my heart,
Now Jesus, the Master, has come ;
He deigns in a soul so unworthy as mine
To abide, and make it his home.

“ Nobody knows what I have in my heart ;
A peace like a river that flows,
A yearning of love that would bless the whole world,
Nobody, nobody knows.”

Sketches of personal experience like these might be gathered in great numbers were it desirable. Let us thank God that very many are coming to know Christ as their living, present personal Saviour. This last is selected because the writer evidently had no preconceived theory in regard to the experience,—had not been studying “ Guides to Holiness ” or anything of the sort. She simply hun-

gered and thirsted for righteousness, went to Jesus and was filled.

If such movement of professing Christians unsettles, as she says they tell her, the faith of half the church, the sooner it is unsettled the better. Multitudes are resting their hopes of a happy eternity upon, they know not what, and are going they know not where. O, for an awakening of those who are at ease in Zion !

It is doubtless to be expected that any who tell of such an experience as this will be misunderstood, and may very likely be misrepresented ; but let them not on that account put on any of the airs of martyrdom, nor cry out persecution. We see this done sometimes, and it is not a pleasant sight.

And just here, begging pardon of any who may be wounded by the remark, the writer feels compelled to say that his observation and experience during the years that have passed since he came to know this great salvation, have led him to think that “Holiness Meetings” and gatherings for the express purpose of promoting the “Higher Life,” may, and do sometimes become, when continued as an institution, a sort of “mutual admiration societies,” and tend to foster spiritual pride, and cause a separation of those who attend them from the rest of the church, which works harm. He has known cases where the kindest possible reproof of what seemed an error or a fault, gave deep and lasting offence to those who made high profession of

sanctification. No doubt it is one of the pleasantest things in the world to be surrounded by those who wholly believe in us, and sympathize with us, and see no faults in us, but it is not always the healthiest for our souls.

Let us then separate ourselves, as little as possible from even the weakest of those who are trying to walk the Christian path, and if we are misunderstood and misrepresented, let us remember that "this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." If we have become as truly self-renounced as a consecrated Christian should be, the buffetings we get, whether for faults or for doing well will not wound us deeply. Over-sensitiveness to blame, or even to sneers and slights, shows that self is still too important a factor in our religious life.

"O, to be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at his feet,"
An earthen "and emptied vessel,
For the Master's use made meet."

And let us remember, while we tell the story of salvation as we have learned it, and tell it fearlessly, for Jesus' sake, that we are but learners yet, that we do not know it all, and are very liable to be mistaken. Therefore let us tell it humbly, keeping I out of sight as much as may be, and be patient if our testimony is not received. Only the Holy Spirit can demonstrate the truth so that it shall

have power. If we have really learned the deeper lessons of the gospel, if we have become more "spiritual" than some of our fellow-disciples, we should, instead of being separated from them be drawn towards them by such a brooding, mother-like spirit as filled Paul when he wrote to the Galatians, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you."

Brethren suffer this word of exhortation. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

XII.

THE OFFICES AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“ And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.”

John xiv: 16.

THE work which is done by the Holy Spirit in awakening, convicting, converting, and sanctifying the soul has been much before us—necessarily so in the preceding essays. The subject is not, however, exhausted ; and to those who love God, it cannot be.

The personality of the Spirit, and his relations to the Father and Son, will almost certainly be more or less in the mind of all earnest Christians. Still it is hardly necessary that we should fully understand the matter in order to receive the blessings which it is his office to bring to us.

Some time since, an aged sister in the Lord said to her pastor that she had been much troubled of late because she could not, in her prayers seem to distinguish between the Father, Son, and Spirit. The reply of the pastor was, that for himself, he had for a long time almost ceased to think about such distinction. Jesus said, “If any man love me he

will keep my words, and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." The meaning of this must be, that in the loving and obedient heart the Holy Spirit will abide, revealing there the Father and the Son. If he comes, then the whole God-head comes; and if we may enjoy God and his love, we need not be greatly troubled if we cannot analyze his personalities.

Mr. Boardman, in "The Higher Christian Life," says, "The Father is the fulness of the God-head in invisibility without form, whom no creature hath seen or can see.

The Son is the fulness of the God-head embodied that his creatures may see him, and know him, and trust him.

The Spirit is the fulness of the God-head in all the active workings, whether of creation, providence, revelation, or salvation by which God manifests himself to and through the universe. Alluding to the Son's being called the Word, he formulates the idea thus,

*"The Father is like the thought unexpressed,
The Son is like the thought expressed in words,
The Spirit is like the word working in other
minds."*

Mr. Walker, in the "Doctrine of the Holy Spirit" develops strongly the same thought. And further, speaking of the work of the Spirit, he says,

"§ 10—The Holy Spirit uses the personality of Christ in the work of Redemption."

“Hence we are taught that the Holy Spirit, when he comes to the soul, does not speak of himself,—*of his own personality*,—but he takes of the things that belong to Christ, and shows them to the believer. When the soul is conscious of the divine presence, *it does not recognize two personalities*; because the Spirit comes clothed in the personality of Jesus and its life is bestowed through the manifestations which God makes of himself in his Son.”

These views cannot be far from the truth, as it is revealed in the Scriptures. This much is certainly true, that the work which God does *in* human hearts, in regenerating and saving men, is done by the Holy Spirit; and it is equally true and hardly less evident, that all the influences that are exerted *upon* men to induce a turning to God are put forth by the same Spirit.

In and *upon*,—these words indicate a division of the subject, which we may make in studying, the Spirit’s work upon a soul.

A soul that is born of the Spirit must have so received him, that he is *interior* to it, and acts *directly* upon its powers.

But before this *interior* and *direct* action can take place, a soul must be so subdued unto God as to cease its rebellion, and be willing to receive the Spirit; and the work of bringing about this submission, is equally the work of the Spirit, but is done mostly by *exterior* and *indirect* influences.

The exterior and indirect work of the Spirit. „

This is first in order, and we will study it first.

The seminal principle—the seed—in the generation of a spiritual life, is the word of God.

This should never for a moment be forgotten.

God's children are "born" or begotten "again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the *word of God* which liveth and abideth forever." Paul said to the Corinthians, "In Jesus Christ I have begotten you *through the gospel*."

But the word of God is effective in awakening and converting men only as it is made "quick"—or living—"and powerful," by the present action of the Spirit. "The letter of the word alone can never give life. If the Holy Spirit were to leave the world, we have no reason to believe that another human soul would ever be so awakened as to seek after God.

It is also a part of God's plan that the word of God shall be preached by living men who have themselves felt its power, and come to love it. By the foolishness of preaching God will save them that believe. He will have the waters of salvation flow out from those who have themselves drank of them. And yet no preaching is effective except as it is made powerful by the Spirit. Paul may plant and Apollos may water but God the Spirit must work with them or there is no growth.

It will be a narrow and imperfect view of the work of preaching the gospel if we confine it to what is technically called preaching. Instead of

this, we must think of it as including everything that is done by disciples of Christ to make the good news of salvation by Christ known to others. Every effort made by tongue or pen to make Jesus known is preaching the gospel. Nor must we confine our thought to direct effort. Jesus said to his followers "Ye are the light of the world. Let your light shine." We cannot think of light as trying to shine. If it is not covered up it must shine ; that is its nature. So God's children must show forth Christ, if Christ is in them. Every true Christian life is the gospel incarnate. This the world understands, better, it may be than we think, and there is no preaching so effective as holy living.

Dr. Chalmers said : "There is an energy of moral suasion in a good man's life, passing the highest efforts of the orator's genius. The seen, but silent beauty of holiness speaks more eloquently of God and of duty than the tongues of men and of angels. Christianity itself, I believe, owes by far the greater part of its moral power, not to the precepts or parables of Christ, but to his own character. The beauty of that holiness which is enshrined in the four brief biographies of the man of Nazareth has done more and will do more to regenerate the world, and bring in everlasting righteousness, than all the other agencies put together. It has done more to spread his religion in the world, than all that has ever been preached or written on the evidences of Christianity."

Now holy living is the consequence, and the proof, of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul ; and so, all the moral power of all the holy lives Christianity has given to the world is indirectly the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is still another mode of action by which the Spirit exerts a saving power *upon* men.

Paul said to the Corinthians, that his preaching among them had been “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit.” By demonstration of the Spirit he must mean the action of the Spirit in applying truth to the minds and hearts of sinners, “enlightening the eyes of their understanding,” so as to make them feel the force of the truth. This also is properly a part of the exterior and indirect action of the Spirit. We must not think of him as entering into sinners’ hearts, while he would yet be an unwelcomed and stranger guest, but rather as an invisible friend, watching and waiting around them, bearing patiently with their rebellion and their sin, though he must loathe and hate it, and seeking continually for the most favorable moment to whisper the call of mercy, or throw into them the sharp arrows of convicting truth, and then, when that truth has done its work, to reveal Christ and the cross to them, and so the forgiveness of sins, and a hope of salvation.

In this line also, we must believe, is his work upon a multitude of those who call themselves children of God. He does not come into their hearts,

only as he visits them now and then, seeking to win them to a closer union with God ; but he is continually watching over them, even when they are wandering like sheep astray upon the wild dark mountains, far from the shepherd and the fold. Hardly less painful must this be, than watching over careless sinners. Indeed it may well be that it grieves him more ; for many do what is hardly less than to “crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.” And even where there is correct deportment and outward observance of morality and religious duties, he must see in many a heart unbelief so deep and dark, and such indulgence in heart sins, as to utterly preclude his entering in and abiding there. And yet he waits and watches, and pleads with the wanderer, seeking by one means or another to lead him back, and if it may be, to so subdue him to Christ that the heart will be opened at last, and himself welcomed as master and keeper of the whole being.

When he does come in this way to be master, then the *direct or interior* action which has been spoken of begins.

This direct, interior action, is a true and proper inspiration.

Does this startle you ! It need not. An inspiration is an inbreathing, and when the Holy Spirit comes to a human soul, he breathes himself in upon it, that is all.

The effect of this inbreathing, we should con-

clude from *à priori* reasoning, must be, to so pervade the human spirit, as to modify and regulate its action, conforming it to the mind and will of God ; and so to reveal God to its consciousness as to give it a blessed sense of union, of oneness with God.

Now it is just this that the Bible teaches us to expect from the indwelling of the Spirit ; and just this which is realized by those who receive him.

But in studying his work in the soul, we shall be aided by thinking of certain specific things which the Bible teaches us he will do for us.

THE COMFORTER.

Jesus said to the disciples, “ If I go away I will send the Comforter to abide with you forever.” The Comforter—we have reason to rejoice that Jesus used that word. It more than suggests that he did not forget, even in the hour when the dark shadow of his own unparalleled sufferings was falling upon him, that his followers would have that to meet in this world, which would make a Comforter very needful and very precious to them.

Jesus, my Lord, I thank thee that thou dost never forget—thy sufferings did not, and thy glory does not, make thee forget thy weak, and often weary ones who are treading earth’s thorny path.

A desire for happiness is as natural to every human being as the desire for food. It is as nearly an instinct as anything about us, and is doubtless implanted in us by our Creator. It is depraved

now, together with our appetites and propensities, and may be thought of as the leader of them all in rebellion against God's law. Certainly, wherever it rules in a soul, God does not rule.

And yet God made us to be happy—made us to desire happiness, and our true spiritual welfare requires, not so much the annihilation of the desire, as its control and direction.

In the old days of monkish aceticism it appears to have been thought that if one aspired to be holy, he must almost cease to be a man ; must cut himself off from all ordinary association with his fellows, and deny himself the most simple and innocent gratifications of sense. We do not think this now ; we do not think that holiness requires celibacy, a home in a secluded cave, a hair-cloth shirt, and weakening fasts and vigils. And, yet, are we sure, quite sure, that our freedom is not largely freedom from the desire and purpose to be holy, rather than from wrong notions of the way of holiness ? Are there not many among us to whom religion is easy, only because it is a careless, slipshod sort of religion ? When we seriously try to be religious do we not feel ourselves fettered and confined, as though we were in a sort of strait jacket ? Do we not have a sort of half-defined feeling that a good hearty laugh will grieve the Spirit ; and that really holy persons must be long-faced and sad, and rather uncomfortable as companions ? Who of us has not heard, many times, the remark, most solemnly uttered, “Jesus

never laughed. He wept, but it is not said that he ever laughed?" Probably, ascetic notions have their roots in human nature, and will never wholly cease.

Yet the type of a developed Christian, given us by Jesus, was a little child ; and who ever knew a healthy, unspoiled little child that was not glad-hearted, joyous ? God's children are commanded, indeed, to rejoice evermore ; and it is wronging our Father to suppose he is better pleased with us when we are sad.

We ought, no doubt, to be careful how we seek happiness in earthly sources, in the indulgence of our senses, our appetites, and our propensities. It is easy to be led by these out of the strait and narrow path, into the by-ways of hurtful and sinful pleasure.

The problem is how to be happy, cheerfully, joyously happy, to rejoice as God commands, and yet not seek happiness in any selfish or sinful way, nor seek it as an end.

This problem is solved by the coming of the Comforter. When he breathes himself in upon a human soul he sheds upon it a joy so far excelling all joys that earth and sense can give, that such joys pale and fade away before it, as the stars pale and go out when the sun rises. Beyond all question, the soul in which the Comforter abides has a foretaste of the joys of heaven, has, "an earnest of his inheritance," and is by this made independent of earthly sources of enjoyment. Many there are who

can testify of this independence. Payson said, in his last illness, "I have been all my life like a child whose father wishes to fix his undivided attention. At first the child runs about the room, but his father ties up his feet; then he plays with his hands, until they likewise are tied. Thus he continues to do, till he is completely tied up; then when he can do nothing else he will attend to his father. Just so God has been dealing with me to induce me to place my happiness in him alone. But I blindly continued to look for it here, and God has kept cutting off one source of enjoyment after another, till I find that I can do without them all, and yet enjoy more happiness than ever in my life before."

What Payson seems to have fully learned only upon a dying bed, others have been taught while in the midst of life and labor. None of us need think that such experiences are only for the dying. They are for all God's children, and for them now, if they will but yield up all to their Father, and receive the Comforter to their hearts. Then they shall not only know the peace that passeth all understanding, and the joy that excels all other, but the peace shall keep them, and the joy shall be their strength.

Many religious people speak lightly of the joy of the Lord. They say, "one must serve God from principle and a sense of duty and not from feeling."

Doubtless there is truth in their thought, but there is also error. David sang, "Restore unto me

the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy way and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

He felt that he could not be a successful worker for God without the joy of the Lord in his heart ; and what he needed we need no less.

But, the name by which Jesus called the Spirit and which is translated The Comforter, may be quite as correctly rendered

THE ADVOCATE.

The Holy Spirit is the Advocate of the people of God. But how ? He is not their Advocate in heaven, before the throne ; Jesus is the Intercessor there, and ever liveth to make intercession for us." But here, and now he is our Advocate because he is the inspirer and director of all true prayer.

Strange notions, in regard to prayer, abound in the world ; abound too among orthodox Christian people. The worshiper of the Grand Lama, who fastens his written prayer upon a wooden cylinder and making it revolve, thinks his God will give him credit for everytime it turns up ; and the Romish devotee who counts off his Pater Nosters by the help of his string of beads, thinking God is propitiated by his repetitions, are not the only people in the world whose ideas of prayer are crude and wrong.

The irreverent wit, who said, " Sir, that prayer was the most eloquent prayer ever addressed to a Boston audience "—undoubtedly " hit in the white,"

not only that but many public prayers. They are addressed to the audience not to God. They are a part of the perfunctory services of the pulpit and prayer-room, and are gone through with, because praying "is down in the programme."

Other prayers are the mere repetitions of a form, sometimes of a printed form, but quite as often, of a form that has made itself. By being repeated time after time, certain phrases and Scripture texts wear ruts, as it were, in the memory, so that the prayer once started seems to roll on of itself, even when one is thinking of something else, or is more than half asleep.

Of course the Divine Advocate can have little or nothing to do with such prayers, and it is hard to see how any one can suppose God to care for them otherwise than to feel insulted by them.

But what is true, acceptable prayer?

1. *It is communion with God.*

"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder of such as diligently seek him." And not only this, but he must be conscious of God's presence, and of ability to talk to him and be heard. How can one attain this? How can a sinner gain an audience with the great God? It is the office of the Advocate to reveal God to the soul sense. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh—the Holy Spirit is Jesus manifest in the heart of a disciple. Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." He came when the Spirit

came ;—he comes now where the Spirit comes ; and when he comes he enables the soul to talk with God as one talks with a friend.

But how may I know when he comes to my heart, and that I do truly commune with him ?

Well, not by the mere fact that you have what is called freedom in prayer. It is an error that many fall into, to think that a gush of emotion and an easy flow of words in prayer is proof of the aid of the Holy Spirit. Various things may contribute to produce an exalted state of feeling, and give freedom in praying, or preaching, or religious talking, when the Spirit has really nothing to do with it.

One of the best signs of the Spirit's presence is such an abasement of one's self, such a sense of one's utter weakness and vileness, and such an awe before God, as would seem incompatible with freedom and fluency. Many times God's holiest children find themselves so overcome in this way as to be almost unable to pray coherently ; and especially when alone with God, they can often do nothing but wait before him in silence, and adoringly reach out toward his will. They have boldness before him, but it is not the boldness of self-confidence ; they are made bold by a sense of his infinite love ; and they are enabled to be bold because they are .

—“ too self-renounced for fears.”

2. *But prayer is also petition*—is the expression

to God of the desire felt in the soul for some blessing which it is felt God can give.

In this form of prayer it is always implied that the praying one has faith in God as one who not only has power to do what is asked, but is also willing to be influenced by the prayer of his child. Else the prayer itself is mockery—is a direct insult to God.

“But,” says one, “how can the prayer of a finite and an erring mortal change the mind and plans of the Deity? I believe that the only effect of prayer is the effect it produces upon the one who prays.”

Well if that be all, must we not look upon many things that we find in the Bible as calculated to deceive us? There is nothing that a plain man, who believingly reads the Bible, will find more clearly taught there, than that God is influenced by the prayers of his children.

Besides, there is hardly an earnest Christian anywhere who has not found, scattered along his own life, answers to prayer so direct and immediate as to be quite startling. God seems to love to prove to his believing children, that he is truly a living, personal God who can hear and answer them.

The philosophy of “prevailing prayer” appears to be hard to understand with many. Is not this the reason that it is so? they try to solve its most difficult problems without taking the work of the Divine Advocate into account as one of the factors.

Paul wrote to the Romans, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

Now suppose that I have some strong desires which I wish to bring before God in prayer,—I read these words of inspiration and drink in their spirit. I shall see at once that of myself I do not, and cannot, know all the things that are proper subjects of prayer. I may undoubtedly spread out all my desires with perfect freedom before my Father ; I know that he loves to have me open my whole heart to him,—but this is not all I want,—I have special petitions to urge, what must I do ?

This first, I must seek the endorsement of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. Until I have this I cannot plead for specific blessings. How shall I obtain it ?

I may have it in advance, if the blessing I would seek, is one specifically promised in God’s word. If I desire to be led into the truth as it is in Jesus, if I would be more holy, if I would be filled with the Spirit, if I would ask that God’s kingdom may come and his will be done in the earth, I do not need the endorsement of the Spirit. He has already given it to me. But I may need his help in order that I

may pray as I ought. In all this class of petitions the work of the advocate is to kindle within us the strong desire, and enable us to exercise an unclouded, undoubting faith.

But, if the blessing be not one that is specifically promised, what then? Well, then, if the blessed Advocate is in my heart, he will first enable me to feel submission to God's will. I shall be able to say in regard to my most cherished desires not my will, but thine my God be done. If I cannot say this, if I cannot humbly ask the Spirit to guide me in my petition according to his will, I may as well be silent, my prayer can have no power. But if I can do this, then I may humbly wait before God, and urge my suit, and while I wait, it may be that the desire for the blessing will grow stronger, and I shall see more clearly that giving it may be in harmony with God's will, and a humble boldness may grow up in my soul, which will be like that of the Syro-phenician woman, not to be denied, and my faith may rest upon some such promise as, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son," and thus I may wait, and plead, and expect, till the answer comes.

But, may one gain an assurance that such petitions will be granted? Perhaps not commonly until they are granted; but sometimes the soul may gain an assurance, even while in prayer, that gives perfect rest. Still it will probably be safer not to

prophecy the coming of the blessing, before it comes. Sometimes God's children will, while in prayer, feel a strange, sweet sense of God's love come over them, which they may take for an affirmative answer, when as the result proves, it is only a very loving negative.

But how may I know when the Advocate helps my infirmities and pleads in me according to the will of God?

Chiefly by faith. You may be sure that he is always faithful to his mission, is doing what he is sent to do. In addition to this, a sense of union with God, and the ability to say from the heart "Thy will be done," is very good evidence of his presence.

We may be sure that even when in our hearts he "will not speak of himself," will not proclaim his presence, he will make us conscious of Christ's presence, taking the things of Christ and showing them unto us; beyond this he will be known only by the results of his presence.

We conclude then, that prevailing prayer owes its power to a true and proper inspiration. The blessed Advocate abiding in us, prompts us, inspires us to pray for what he knows it will please God to give in answer to our prayers. And then he hides himself so that the desire, the prayer, the "groanings which cannot be uttered," seem all our own; and when the answer comes, that too is ours, a blessing granted to our petition.

The Holy Spirit is also appointed to be

THE GUIDE

of the disciples of Christ. Jesus said of him "He shall guide you into all truth."

A few years ago, at a Theological Commencement, a band of from fifteen to twenty young men pronounced their graduating orations, most of which were on themes connected with the work of the ministry; then a theological professor addressed the class in a very able manner; and then at the alumni dinner several stirring speeches were made, and in all these there was not one full and unmistakable utterance in regard to the need of the minister of the Holy Spirit's guidance. Brains, culture, work, these were the elements of success which were made specially prominent.

Now there is no reason to doubt but that all the speakers were orthodox in regard to the Holy Spirit, but they did not think about him, that is all.

Brains, culture, work—these are what the churches ask for in the ministry. If in addition to these they get spirituality, godliness, it is all well; but how large a proportion of the pastors of our land are sought and settled because they are men "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

Commentaries on the Scriptures are flooding the church. Dr. Gills "Continent of Mud," as Robert Hall is said to have called his commentary, is outgrown and is now only an Island in an Archipelago.

Many of these works are learned and able ; they exhibit especially great knowledge of what other men have thought, and great skill in making the Scriptures harmonize with the opinions of their authors ; but often they hardly show deep spiritual insight, and one must feel that some things that are revealed to babes are hidden from these wise and prudent ones.

It does certainly seem that in these days the Holy Spirit is but little thought of as the appointed and needed guide of the church.

Why is this ?—Possibly it may grow in part, out of the feelings of disgust and repulsion, which most intelligent people have when they see ignorant and fanatical enthusiasts, claiming to be taught and led by the Spirit. Most of us have seen enough of people who thought they were led by spiritual impressions, so that we have no desire to be led in that way ; and have heard enough of preachers and exhorters who thought they had only to “open their mouths and the Lord would fill them,” to wish for no more of that kind of teaching. Possibly too, pride of intellect and culture may have much to do with it.

It will hardly do, however, for us to allow either one or the other feeling to turn us away from a great gospel truth and gospel blessing.

But how is the Holy Spirit to be our guide ?

Certainly, by enabling us to grasp the truth.

Truth is absolute. Gospel truth is the outflow

of the infinite mind of God, and must be perfect as his nature. But the truth as it is developed in our minds must be modified by many things. Our state of heart, our supposed interests, our education, our prejudices, the opinions of our friends, all these and many other things will affect our reception of the truth.

Now let us recall to mind that the coming of the Spirit into a human soul is not possession, only inspiration. He does not act in place of the soul, but just regulates and quickens its action. He breathes himself into—pervades with his blessed presence every part of it, and so the desires and the will are brought into harmony with God and with the truth. When this effect is produced, the truth will come in of itself, as the light comes in when the doors and shutters of a room are closed.

When the Spirit comes, our interests become so blended with God's interests and will, that they do not oppose a full reception of the truth.

Education and prejudices appear to be harder to be overcome than almost any other obstacle. We see this illustrated in the case of the apostles. The divine enlightenment of the day of Pentecost did not remove their Jewish prejudices. These clung to them for many years—perhaps they never were wholly freed from them. Yet we must believe that they were so far overcome as not to hinder greatly the reception and development of the truth. As it was then so it is now, education and prejudice.

are hard to overcome, and to their power we must attribute largely the divisions that exist among those most willing and anxious to be led into all truth. Let us hope that a day is coming when even these obstacles shall be done away.

The influence of friends, their opinions and wishes is also hard to subdue.

The love of Jesus in the soul, makes friendship dearer and sweeter than it would otherwise be ; and when our friends are also friends of Jesus, it is peculiarly pleasant to walk hand in hand with them in the heavenward path. But one who would be led into all the truth must be prepared to walk alone if need be. It will not do for him to yield himself implicitly to any but his divine Guide. And it is well that when his Guide comes, he can make him willing to leave all and follow him.

It will be clearly seen, it is hoped, that what is claimed for those who are guided by the Spirit is something very different from infallibility. There has been much misapprehension at this point. Some, who have felt that they were being guided by the Spirit, have hardly been able to see how one guided by him could fall into error ; and many who have watched those who have trusted in his guidance, have not hesitated to charge them with believing themselves perfect in thought, word, and action. Sometimes, probably, such charges have been malicious, and persecuting ; but it is believed not always. Occasion may have been given for them.

It should be remembered, on the one hand, that a humble trust in the Holy Spirit, that he will fulfil to us the express promises in regard to guidance, may consist with a constant fear of going wrong, and such a sense of past shortcomings as utterly precludes all thought of perfect knowledge or perfect service ; and on the other, that the Spirit does not come to remove our infirmities, but to help to overcome them, and enable us, according to the measure of our ability, to see and understand the truth. He does not give us new revelations, but helps us in studying and applying the old.

In studying,—the idea has been quite prevalent in some sections of the church, that if one were led by the Spirit, he would not need to study. Preachers have boasted of preaching without study ; and many foolish people have thought such preachers more sure to be aided by the Spirit. There cannot well be a more total misapprehension of the Spirit's work than this. He comes to enable us to study, not to enable us to do without it. The apostle's injunction to Timothy, “ Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,” ought to be regarded as an imperative command to all who attempt to teach others the way of life.

O, may our divine Guide so reveal himself to our understanding, that while we become humbly and believingly dependent on him every moment, we may be so without presumption, or neglect of

our proper duty ; and may diligently work out our own salvation, and do all our work, remembering that it is God the Spirit that worketh in us, both to will and to do all his good pleasure.

Let us constantly ask him to guide us into all truth.

THE KEEPER.

“Except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain.”

“When the enemy comes in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.”

Probably there are many Christian people who do not feel deeply their need of special divine help, to enable them to live a Christian life. They expect God to help them in a general way—if they help themselves, and bless them if they are faithful to duty. They are it may be, persons of much self-control and self-reliance, and have for their standard of Christian attainment to be as good as the average of Christian people around them. For them the passages quoted above have little meaning.

There is another class, who have had awakened within them a desire and purpose to keep all God's requirements, and be Bible Christians. They have set this for their mark. And yet the more they have struggled toward it, the farther they seem from it. There seems to be a fatal weakness within themselves that causes them to break all their

good resolutions and yield to temptation, and fall into sin continually. Many of them have become discouraged and almost hopeless of ever getting near to God. The heart sickness which they feel at times is distressing.

Now what they need is to receive the Holy Spirit as the keeper of their hearts. When he comes to abide in them, he will be like both a commander and a sleepless, careful sentinel in a fortress. Now, "the enemy comes in like a flood," at unexpected times and places, and they are overcome almost ere they are aware; then, no matter how stealthily the assault is made, he will be on the alert and grasping a standard—the cross—he will shout an alarm to the garrison, and lead all the forces of the soul against the invader. Observe—he does not himself repel the enemy, but lifts up a standard and rallies all the powers of the soul against him. Of course these powers must follow his lead; but they will do it; they will do it always if he is abiding in the soul. Where he abides as master and keeper, there will be no dallying with sin.

A brief sketch of experience may help us to understand this matter.

A WEAK ONE KEPT.

One Lord's-day afternoon, in the spring of 1835, a lad was sitting in a corner of the gallery, in the old Congregational meeting-house of a little New England town, listening to a sermon on the parable

of the Prodigal Son. In the course of that sermon the lad was led to see that he could come to Jesus, and hope to be accepted. He went home solemnly happy, and for weeks thereafter loved to pray, loved to read the Bible, and at times felt his heart bound with exulting joy, and exceeding love to Jesus.

After a while, when the freshness of his new feelings had passed away, and the revival influences that were around him ceased, the Bible and prayer began to lose their interest, and soon old pleasures regained their charm, and old besetting sins came back in power. He had backslidden—and yet, not so far as to lose hope, or give up resolving and praying against sin.

From this time on for many years there came, more or less often, revival seasons, times of more than usual religious interest and enjoyment. These were sometimes in connection with revivals in the church, sometimes not. They were pleasant, happy times, but they would not last. Often while they did last they were marred by an uneasy restless fear lest something should happen or be done, that should grieve the Spirit, and throw him back into the old deadness. Of course he wished such seasons to last—he was happier than at other times, and had a vague, half-recognized idea that he was also better, holier; and he used to try to be very watchful against anything calculated to disturb his frame of mind, and to pray more than ordinarily, because prayer, he was taught, was a means of safety. And

yet, in spite of all, they would not last. Temptation would come up unexpectedly, or else the power of resisting it would seem to be gone ; he would forget to watch or, quite as often, would grow tired of watching, and feel burdened by it ; prayer would be neglected, or else would become so formal and lifeless as to seem almost more a sin than neglect ; and so he would drop back into the old track, and seek his pleasure chiefly in the things of the world. Much of the time during these years he lived somewhat as the Samaritan people did, of whom it is said, "They feared the Lord and served their own gods."

After many years, there came a change ; how it came ; why it came, has always been a wonder to him ; but it did come. It came all unexpectedly. He had become discouraged and almost hopeless of ever living a different life, when lo ! God was revealed in his soul, revealed as never before, and his whole being was filled with a delicious peace and rest. The old, uneasy fear was gone, the struggle to keep a devotional frame of mind was gone, the weariness in watching was gone ; temptations came, but the soul seemed as sensitive to their approach, as the eye is to touch. It was to him not only a most blessed experience, but a new one. Nothing in his life before had been like it. Would it last ? Many times the suggestion was strongly forced upon his mind, "It will not last ; when the revival goes by you will be back where you were before." The thought was inexpressibly painful.

One day, after some weeks had passed by, and the special excitement of the revival had subsided, he had been out making calls, and had talked until thoroughly weary ; he was on his way home, when all at once it occurred to him, that his sense of union with God, and of rest in him was gone, and that he had in some way grieved the Spirit. Naturally, but foolishly, he looked at once into his heart to examine, and see how it was. He could see nothing there to prove it was not so. The thought was agony. He hastened at once to his closet and fell down before God. He could hardly utter a sentence of verbal prayer, but in his soul were “groanings that could not be uttered.” By and by, the thought came into his mind, “Perhaps God has withdrawn himself for a time to teach you some lesson, to discipline you, to fit you to do his will more perfectly. Are you willing that it should be so, if it be *his* will ? Yes, if he will only hold me up, keep me, so that I shall not sin against him, let him do what seemeth him good.” Soon, it occurred to him to open the Bible and look for some instructive, helping word. He did so, and turning over a few leaves his eyes rested on the cxxi Psalm. “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.” The words seemed to shed a blessed light upon his soul. He read on, verse after verse grew richer, fuller of blessed meaning. God was his keeper, his, now and forever!

The promises seemed burned into his soul. He fell on his knees again and the hot, almost scalding tears burst forth like rain. His greatest fear was taken quite away. The divine keeper had come to stay. This was a joy beyond expression. The full blessedness of that hour, can never be told in this life.

Years have passed since that day. They have been years of trial and temptation, of failure in many things, he has never been able to do anything to be proud of, and there has never been a day when he could say at its close, I have done my whole duty, I have committed no sin : and yet, day by day, and year after year, there has remained with him a sense of God's presence, a sense of union with God, so that he has been enabled to "endure as seeing him who is invisible." His soul is kept in peace, and the power of the world to charm his heart, and either make or mar his happiness, is broken. The old ups and downs have almost wholly ceased. Revivals come and go, but they now seem to make little difference with his relations to God, or his joy in God.

Instances like the above may be found in abundance. They are all around us. The promises of God are sure. And yet, the multitude of Christian people cannot seem to learn how to trust the divine keeper, or how to rest upon the promises. God grant that it may not be always so.

THE SEALER.

“In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.”

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

The uses of a seal are various. Among them are these ; a seal confirms a covenant or agreement ; it gives authority to a state paper, a mandate of government ; it is sometimes put upon property as the owner's or maker's mark.

The Holy Spirit coming to abide in a believer's heart, confirms God's covenant with him.

The hope of many, perhaps a large majority of those who are called Christ's disciples, is not an assured hope. Is it not like a covenant or agreement that has been written out, but is not yet executed—sealed ? Such a covenant may well excite hope, but until it is sealed it does not give assurance. In important matters, people are usually anxious to have such covenants completed. Why are so many willing to delay in this matter ? Is it not important ?

When the Holy Spirit is received, the Faith of Assurance comes. Then also there comes the earnest of our inheritance, or a foretaste of the joys of heaven. God revealed in the soul by the Holy Ghost is heaven begun below.

The Holy Spirit abiding in a believer authenticates him as God's child, as God's representative.

When Jesus, at the time of his ascension, was saying his parting words to the disciples, he expressly told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endowed with power from on high. He would have them go out bearing the impress of the great seal of the King of kings.

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came, and they were sealed. Henceforth they were "known and read of all men," as the servants of the most high God.

What was the authenticating sign, the impression of the seal?

The Gift of Tongues is often spoken of as the sign of the Comforter's presence. A little careful thought must show this to be a mistake. Paul in 1 Cor. xii, xiii and xiv, fixes the true place and relative importance of the gift of tongues. He shows that "tongues," miracles, gifts of healing, and all other special gifts which attended the church, were designed to comfort and establish believers and impress unbelievers. But, they were mere gifts, distributed among the disciples as the Giver pleased, *and were exercised as the Giver prompted*. No one of them appears to have been invariably present with those who had received the Holy Ghost. The apostle in enumerating the gifts, puts "first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Evidently with a purpose, tongues are put last, as thought of lesser

importance. It was a showy gift, and the Corinthians sought it especially ; he would dampen their ardor in that direction, and lead them to seek, instead, the more useful gift of speaking in their own language, words that would edify the church.

It would be interesting to inquire, if we had any source of certain knowledge, how long miracles and the gift of tongues continued in the church. They were claimed for a long time ; indeed they are claimed even now, in the Romish church. The light which we have on the subject leads us to believe that soon after apostolic days, they began to be counterfeited by designing, wicked persons, and were gradually withdrawn. That they were wholly withdrawn, that there have not been in all the ages, miraculous answers to prayer, it would be rash to assert.

But, the seal ; well, when the Comforter came he brought to those who received him, what was better, and of more importance than any special gifts ; he fixed upon their hearts “the image and likeness of Christ.” That is the true seal. Without that all gifts are vain ; with it, though all special gifts are wanting the authentication is perfect.

The image of Christ—what is it ? Christ was a man, a struggling, tried, tempted, yet sinless man ; sinless, because God dwelled in his human form ; the image of Christ must be then, a man in whom God the Holy Spirit abides ; a man kept “by the power of God through faith unto salvation ;” a human

soul, that energized by the Holy Spirit, struggles, according to its ability against all sin and wrong, and in the end wins the crown of victory.

The image of Christ, this will be through all eternity, the peculiar, the distinctive glory of the redeemed. Angels, who have never sinned will not bear it. Like the "new song," it will belong exclusively to those "who have come up through great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Once more, *the Holy Spirit, abiding in a soul, seals that soul, and all its possessions to God as his exclusive property.*

The mass of professing Christians are not conscious of being wholly, unreservedly the Lord's. They see the duty of entire consecration ; they often try to be consecrated ; but somehow, after all, they are not. This shows that the sealer has not been received by them.

There is no more certain sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a man, than his ability to be consecrated. Many of us have given ourselves to God again and again ; have written out covenants and signed them on our knees, and yet could not stay given away. We have been like little children who give away their treasures, and in a few moments claim them again, and *will* have them back. Some of us have learned that God's seal takes away the power and the wish to take any thing back from God.

When the Holy Spirit comes to abide in us—when he breathes himself in upon our Spirit, sweetly, yet efficiently pervading every part of it, we cannot help but be the Lord's. Yet we feel no sense of control. We are consciously as free as ever, but our will so blends with God's will, and harmonizes with it, that we have lost the sense of being our own, or having anything that is our own.

Thus much in regard to the offices and special work of the Holy Spirit. We have tried to get a little view—a glimpse, it is hardly more—of what he is, and what he does for those who love God. Now let us not forget that what he does for us will depend upon our willingness to receive him, and upon our faith in the promises respecting him. Let us remember too, that his mission to us is not merely, nor chiefly to make us happy, but rather to make us holy.

If we truly hunger and thirst after righteousness, it is his to satisfy that hunger and thirst, and we may ask for him, assured that the Father is more ready to give him than earthly parents are to give good things to their children.

If we have not received him, the work of change, the regeneration of our souls has not been completed.

If he has come and abides in us, the generative period is past, and we are born of God. Then we have the adoption of sons and eternal life, and shall

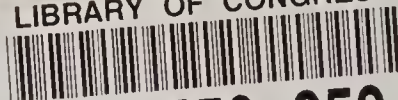
never perish, for none can pluck us out of our Father's hand.

“NOW THE GOD OF PEACE THAT BROUGHT AGAIN FROM THE DEAD OUR LORD JESUS, THAT GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP, THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT, MAKE YOU PERFECT IN EVERY GOOD WORK TO DO HIS WILL, WORKING IN YOU THAT WHICH IS WELL-PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST ; TO WHOM BE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.”

Heb. iii. 20, 21.

THE END.

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